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To Charles Marie Widor

# THE ART OF IMPROVISATION

A handbook of principles and methods for organists,  
pianists, teachers and all who desire to develop extempore playing,  
based upon melodic approach.

by  
T. CARL WHITMER



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FIRST PRINTING  
SECOND PRINTING  
THIRD PRINTING (Revised Edition)  
FOURTH PRINTING

## FOREWORD

It is taken for granted usually that improvisation is of use only to the professional organist. Nothing is further from the case. The real situation is this:

Improvisation is but the natural bubbling over of instinctive musical creation and is a talent that lies dormant in nearly every music student. It is not dependent upon great technic nor upon great musical learning. It is just something that comes from one's fingers—awkwardly or fluently. It comes out of high or low, educated or uneducated just as poetry gushes forth from the Welsh bards. Just average people made most of our folk poems and folk songs. It came out without knowing how it came out. Of course, contemporary education demands that one carry a thing beyond this subconscious stage.

Now, while this new book carries the subject into the complex needs of the concert organist the far greater part of the work is exactly adapted to "people of no pretence" in knowledge or keyboard technic or musical experience. An amateur can use it for the shortest of ditties and can expand as wished, the design of the book being as flexible as talents differ one from another.

In conclusion, it may be well to compare briefly the study of improvisation and composition as usually understood.

In the first, ideas are "tickled" out of one at once upon contact with the keys; while, with the second, ideas have been left largely in the background until basic knowledge is pretty complete. Emotion is immediately stirred in the one while intellectual training, much stressed in composition, keeps the feelings under control.

Originality is expected and tested not so much in the one as in the other.

Mind and fingers act together in improvisation while the composer is nearly pure mind doing his work at leisure, in place of "off the reel."

Some fluency of simple expression is expected at once in the one while that fluency may be worked out gradually by the one who puts his ideas on music paper. However, fluency in both is usually a matter of practice.

And as a final suggestion to students this work can be used as a method in musical composition classes for causing the hesitant student to pass more easily into the *doing*. There is always a wrench in going from pure theory to practice. This *Art of Improvisation* will open the way towards freeing the musical spirit.

## THE AUTHOR

T. Carl Whitmer is the author of several books, as well as of innumerable essays on musical subjects. He is known, also, as a composer of much choral and instrumental music, notably of his *Six Symbolic Dramas*.

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# PREFACE

Any musical person can learn to improvise, provided he allow time each and every day to build and fully establish fluency.

There is no great secret about it; and, with the exception of concert improvisation, no great basis of theoretical knowledge is demanded.

As to great technical (mechanical) basis, that is not at all a prerequisite except in improvisation of the higher forms. Just as there are very charming pieces in the early grades, so there may be very adequate and delightful pieces built up extempore in very simple guise.

Of course, a book such as this certainly is not a "breviary for idlers;" but, a competent and patient worker will nevertheless achieve great inner sense of mental satisfaction which will seem like sport by becoming a "composer for the moment."

Recently I was telling a country boy— who occasionally plays the guitar for me— of this work for "pianists and organists". He said, wouldn't it be equally good for guitarists. I said, "Why, of course. Why didn't I think of that?" So, let us disregard the words "for organists" and rather think of it as written for everybody who plays.

Guilmant wrote: "Organists who are solicitous for the dignity of the art of their instrument must most methodically work at improvisation and develop themselves in the many different musical forms.

All such studies must be made very slowly: it is the only way to play well and improvise happily."

The early writers of technical handbooks liked to call them by some highly stilted name like "Gradus ad Parnassum". But, do we not know that many at the ripe age of seventeen or twenty-two feel that they already are on Parnassus, that it no longer is necessary to lead them there!

Nevertheless, I have worked this book out as a *Gradus*, in the old sense, and quite fully believe it will lead even a musical sophomore to at least some farther temple— in case he really *is* on the mount.

The author has consulted all available works in several languages and believes that this is the only work that illustrates nearly every point in progress by means of one given motif.

The use of many differing motifs has been a stumbling block to the explaining of the art of "unfoldment". One can illustrate most anything if one has the world's most carefully chosen subject. But the rub consists in illustrating the point when one has a probable *worst* subject, as often falls to the lot of improvisers.

It is my hope that this work will lead many good musicians to make yet finer and more far-reaching use of their powers. I believe that it forms an adequate basis for the development of those of little talent as well as for those who may be rich in genius and worthy successors to the Great Masters of the Art of Improvisation.

# PART ONE

# THE CHURCH ORGANIST

## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL BASIC PRINCIPLES

*(Read this chapter. Later, come back to it for restudy.)*

The chief principle underlying an easy and fluent improvisation is the *exhaustive study of the melodic, rhythmic and structural aspects and possibilities of a fractional part*— such as one or two measures— *of the basic melodic theme selected.*

Every thematic bit of improvisation must be conceived of as a short musical idea which must be adhered to and extended until it has run its course. An unfolding structure first and last will be the ideal.

The harmonic aspects must be disregarded until all other generating of effects has been accomplished. In other words, a short rhythmic-melodic entity must become a longer entity by expansion. *This is your problem.*

Invariably think of this basic melody as put together with other melodies in very definite and clear voice-parts. This is the beginning of wisdom.

Always consider that the basic theme— normal and inverted— has hundreds of facets, if one but turn them to varying lights and effects.

Never consider the given tonality of the theme as final, i.e. as a settled thing. Rather, consider it as possibly existing in six or seven keys.

All improvisation is relatively easy if one has studied the endless possible shapes and migrations of a given melody.

Regard the basic notes as a spider might its web:

- a) as spinning— how long;
- b) as design— how built.

The differences between playing a set printed phrase and expanding one extempore are essentially different psychological processes. The first is reproductive, while the second is generative resulting in budding, flowering, unfolding or expansion.

In the reproductive, the player functions more as mechanism. In unfolding an idea he is "like unto a god, with power to create good and evil".

Usually it puzzles the student, who likely has studied Harmony, first of all to learn that harmonizations, as he knows them, are the least important of his efforts. The most important of his efforts are listed under the heads of counterpoint (polyphony) and structure.

Contrapuntal combinations are not only limitless, but the process gives a forward movement, without having the finality or static character of harmonizations.

Harmonies, as devices, are fewer in number and— as stated— more static in tendency. The chord plan has a fixity of purpose that is sure to stop one before one is well started. Also, chord progressions are hedged about by rules that will make the student too conscious of right and wrong, instead of inculcating the necessary feeling of forging ahead.

If the improviser "gets stuck" (his favorite word!) it is because he sees his theme as a finished and complete entity. Harmonizing usually produces or assists in producing this result. *The idea, on the contrary, must always be kept in a state of flux.*

Copy on music paper and place on piano the given melody for improvisation without any harmony attached to it. Later, omit clefs.

The process of extempore playing is synthetic, but a preliminary analysis plays a big rôle in developing one's spinning power.

One must get on intimate terms little by little with the form and style of all the different sorts of structures such as Two and Three Part Form, Minuet, Sonata Form, etc.

In conclusion of these generalizations I would say that the theme material must be exhausted by mental processes before one's emotions can be set into action.

Also, in improvisation, when one has made a note mistake, or rhythmic or harmonic error *do not correct it*. Rather, *make use of it*, repeating that "error" in the following phrases. In other words, incorporate the error and it becomes part of the pattern or scheme itself. When skill is attained all will merge very naturally with the plan. An error may be only an unintentioned rightness; good, but not what "you meant to do".

Do not get too fussy about how every part of the "thing" sounds. Go ahead. All processes are at first awkward and clumsy and "funny". Polishing is not at all the important thing; instead, strive for a rough go-ahead energy. Do not be afraid of being wrong; just be afraid of being uninteresting.

It always is difficult to remember what one has improvised in order that the part may be repeated in essence, (as in Song Form, etc.). That, too, becomes easy. It is not necessary to remember all details, but it is necessary to recall plan and method and general character.

In general, there are two ways to improvise. The first is by expansion and the other is by the use of a set form. Whenever in doubt use some set form, but experiment with expansion until you get this one thought deep down: *In expansion the form is generated*. It makes itself, in other words.

Whereas, in the classical sort of mold, the player first decides on a form such as A-B-A and then proceeds more or less mechanically (until he gets his stride) to build each subject; which is perhaps a shorter and less concentrated and therefore easier way to get the sense of achievement. However, there need be very little of too regulating a theory but there is an immense amount of the *doing* in the most direct of ways.

I am usually asked about *technic*; i.e. the muscular ability to play. A technic including the third grade is usually presupposed. But, it is not essential to a work on Improvisation to expect one person's muscular agility to be the same as another's.

The way to improvise is to improvise. Use the technic at hand, much or little; slow or fast. If *scales* are weak, or perchance *arpeggios*, consult a "method" or a teacher. But, every improviser will practice some technical exercises daily if he expects his playing smoothness and ease to increase. But, pieces of great charm may be written or improvised in the early grades: witness Bach's so-called Anna Magdalena's Clavecin Book.

Rafael Joseffy's *Piano Technic* will give excellent training to the fingers. Or, the exhaustive Alberto Jonas' work can help on any and every matter that can possibly arise in connection with refractory digits.

There is a charming lithograph, by Odile Rédon, of a 'part of a part' of a tree outside a window. May we not be happy, also, in fragmentary ideas occasionally in improvisation. Every composer has a few sketches that no one would part with. Surely not every thing we build has to be monumental and the last word on the subject.

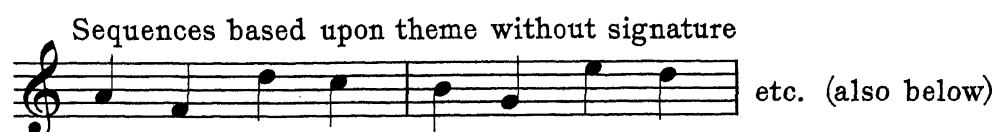
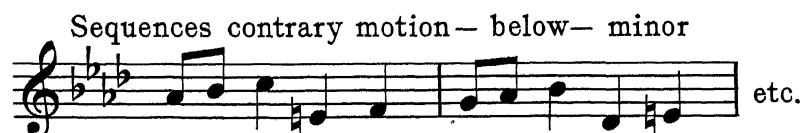
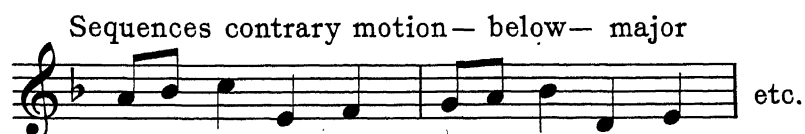
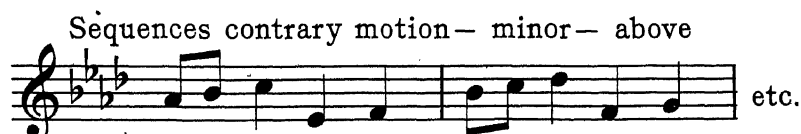
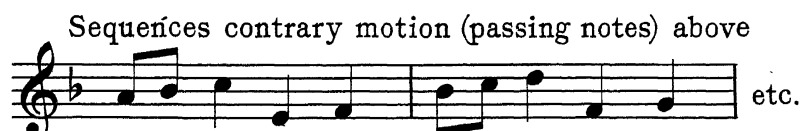
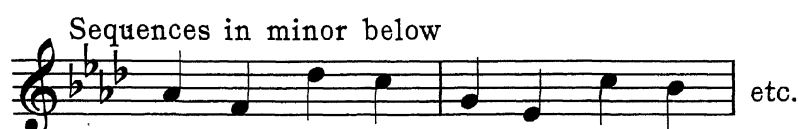
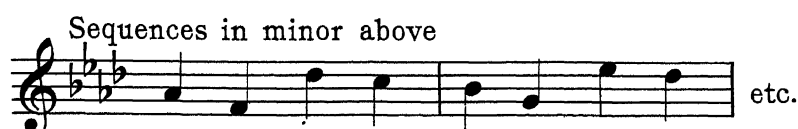
## CHAPTER II

### PRELIMINARY STUDIES FOR A GIVEN THEME

Play slowly, *at different registers*, alternating hands, the following sequences based upon the first two measures of Sir Henry Gauntlett's Hymn, "University College."

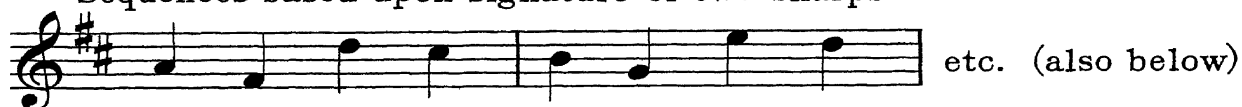


#### I





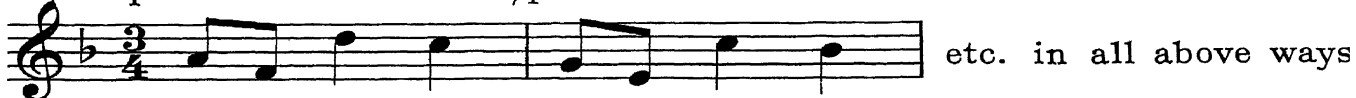
Sequences based upon signature of two sharps



Sequences based upon signature of three sharps



Sequences as above in 3/4 time



## II

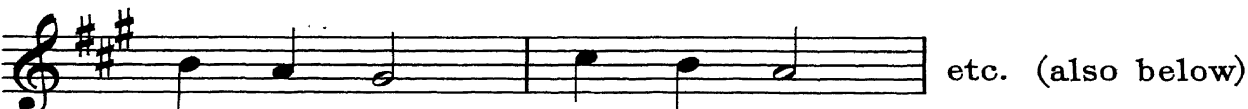
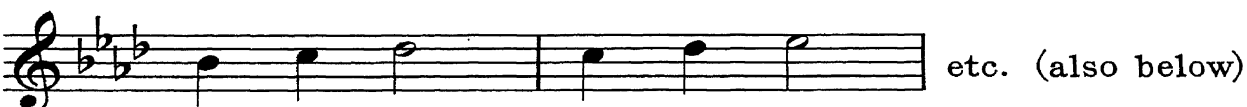
*Sequences based upon second measure*



In minor



Contrary motion



## III

Sequences based on both measures



and

throughout the whole previous series.

## IV

Reverse the measures



etc. throughout series. Include now passing

and auxilliary notes.

## V

Reverse the notes



etc.

## VI

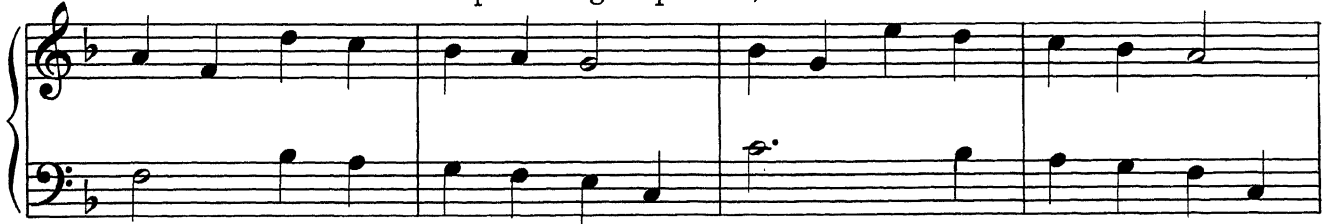
Alter intervals and rhythm:—



etc.

## VII

Add a bass voice to all the preceding sequences, such as:—



etc.,

making slight variations in bass voice and adding passing notes etc.

## VIII

Place also in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time:—

Slow



etc.

Fast



etc.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PHRASE

It may seem unnecessary at this late date of the world to hold up innocent looking phrases for examination, but it is doubtful whether players generally give "creative thought" to it. Ultimately, we should play as we speak English— without too much analysis of our vehicle. But, in a work like this for many types of experience, a restudy of the phrase is essential.

Note the following phrases, all based on our theme:



- a) Place a simple bass part to all the above;
- b) Play backwards to see effect.

A phrase may be any length whatever. But, once used, it must be well adhered to as to its scheme.

In the last movement of Beethoven's first piano Sonata we have (in the middle part) a *ten measure phrase* that is interesting in its "purposeful movement." Compare it with the opening theme. In the last analysis the only way really to learn things is to go to the sources. Bach and Beethoven are the great musical sources.

## The Thesis and Antithesis

A good way to discover the consequent, or answer, to a phrase is to play the question (thesis) of a phrase in some piece new to you. Then, put in your own answer, comparing it immediately with that given by the composer. It is a very practical way to get the feeling of *forward movement* that a good, complete phrase possesses.

*A phrase is your essential unit.*

phrase questions, using our now almost too familiar theme.



IS

ANTITHESIS



- e Alto part to above;
- e Alto and Tenor parts to above;
- e Bass, Alto and Tenor parts to above.

of the phrase, examine the chapters on same in "Homophonic Forms of (former) by Percy Goetschius. The given musical examples are numer-

Item # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone # 816-485-882  
 Customer # *Johnson*  
 ROUTE TO *Main* (Agency)  
 REQUEST for *John*

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*A phrase is your essential unit.*

Here follow some answers to phrase questions, using our now almost too familiar theme.

### THESIS

### ANTITHESIS

The image displays five musical staves, each illustrating a 'Thesis' and an 'Antithesis' pair. The 'Thesis' section is on the left, and the 'Antithesis' section is on the right, separated by a double bar line. The staves are in various time signatures: 3/2, 4/4, 3/2, 4/4, and 5/4. The notation includes notes, rests, and bar lines, with a double bar line separating the thesis and antithesis sections.

- a) Place simple Alto part to above;
- b) Place simple Alto and Tenor parts to above;
- c) Place simple Bass, Alto and Tenor parts to above.

For more extended study of the phrase, examine the chapters on same in "Homophonic Forms of Musical Composition" (Schirmer) by Percy Goetschius. The given musical examples are numerous and valuable.

## Cadences

As part of the phrase, when harmonized, we have cadences, or endings, with the following usual and chief classification:—

Authentic — Plagal — Half — Interrupted

The image shows four musical examples of cadences in G major (one sharp, F#), each consisting of two measures. The notes are as follows:

- Authentic:** Treble clef, G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter); Bass clef, G2 (quarter), G3 (quarter).
- Plagal:** Treble clef, G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter); Bass clef, G2 (quarter), E3 (quarter).
- Half:** Treble clef, G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter); Bass clef, G2 (quarter), D3 (quarter).
- Interrupted:** Treble clef, G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter); Bass clef, G2 (quarter), G3 (quarter).

Below the notes are labels: D, T, SD, T, T, D. To the right of the last example is the text: "D to relative minor, or chord other than the Tonic."

Two general types of endings are those which  
 a) close on an accent; b) those which close off the accent.

a) Masculine

The image shows a musical example of a masculine ending in 2/4 time. The treble clef has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4. The bass clef has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G2. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

b) Feminine

The image shows a musical example of a feminine ending in 2/4 time. The treble clef has a quarter note G4 followed by a quarter rest. The bass clef has a quarter note G2 followed by a quarter rest. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

[See Chopin's Polonaise in A for typical case of b)]

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CODA

A Coda is, first, the addition to a phrase or theme of any number of measures, extended to keep away abruptness and stiffness and foursquareness. This is the first consideration when flexibility of form is considered.

The second and greatest use of a Coda is a *summing up* of material, just as a speaker does at the end of a speech.

Study the Beethoven Codas and one's Coda-education is complete. For example, Codas to Opus 2, No. I, Adagio; Opus 13, I; and Opus 81, I.

A Coda, then, is anything from a brief extension to a full resumé and a development. The bigger the thought and form, the more important the Coda.



## CHAPTER V

### TIME MARKS

Not so many 'folks' seem to understand the real significance of our very simple time signatures.  $\frac{4}{4}$  time, for example, means not only four counts to a measure, but *two accents*. The accent is the essential thing.\*

So, lining up the usual time marks, we have:—



Note:— Beat these out as upon a drum many times until distinctions are very evident.

\*For further study of rhythm and accents see *Music to the Listening Ear* by Will Earhart (Witmark).

## CHAPTER VI

# MODULATION

(HARMONIC AND MELODIC)

Most everyone, during his musical life, studies more or less "at" modulation; which as every man knows, is the process of changing easily and smoothly from one key to another. However, I rise to say that modulation which brings the keys closer together may bring, and usually does force the actual ideas or themes further apart unless the essential thematic core is preserved. This core is the rhythmic and contour essence of the theme one modulates to or from.

Our chief plan should not be to unify keys but to unify themes, or ideas. One will recall that the old style accompanist (and recitalist, too, for that matter) attempted to bring his pieces into closely related tonalities and succeeded admirably (as my experience goes) in "disconcerting" and divorcing the themes.

At any rate, anybody who is even a very mild modern knows that the new music recognizes all keys as equidistant. So that, if modulation be attempted in new music he, the accompanist, is doing the worst thing in the long list of bad things. New music simply doesn't go from one key to another in conventional fashion.

But, since few perhaps have reached that blessed state, the many will have to continue to make studies in modulation based on some textbook of Harmony. After which and during which they will examine the transitions from key to key in the Beethoven Sonatas.

## Essentials of Formal Modulation

a) A note in common between two chords will help to swing most modulations:

Ex. *F to G*

b) Enharmonic modulation:

Ex. *F to F#*

c) The old augmented sixth chord:

Ex. *F to A*

Ex. *cresc.*

d) The dominant seventh chord method, such as one hears in vocal studios:

F to A $\flat$

*f* *rall. assai* *p*

e) Note the way an altered chord assists; albeit, too chromatic to be highly musical.  
Rather second-rate:

F $\sharp$  to B $\flat$  minor— not in a hurry.

*f* *rall.* *p*

F $\sharp$  to B $\flat$  minor— in quite a hurry, with dominant 7<sup>th</sup> only.

*f* *rall.* *p*

- 1) A good rule, no matter which of the above ways is used, is: Select your note or chord and swing on it like a monkey on a tree!
- 2) Never be in a hurry to modulate.  
Abruptly jump to new key rather than feel rushed.
- 3) A modulation *must be based in all cases upon a motif* taken from piece or part before, or piece or part after.

### Exercises:—

Modulate from    F minor to D  
                       F minor to G  
                       F minor to A  
                       F major to F#  
                       F# —     to D  
                       F# —     to G  
                       F# —     to Ab

using our theme as in early sequences.

Modulate from	A $\flat$ to C	A $\flat$ to E
	A $\flat$ to D	A $\flat$ to B
	A $\flat$ to F $\sharp$	A $\flat$ to G

using theme of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 26, first movement.

*Modulate always with some expression, con amore!*

## Melodic Modulation

Harmonic modulation is not the only kind. The *melodic* type is even more useful for our purpose. The notes may be conceived as harmonic by suggestion.

a) From F to G

Modulation from the given motif (in F) to the anthem "Author of Life Divine" (in E) by Eric Thiman (M. Witmark & Sons).

*Slowly*

*p* *cresc.*

*f*

*rall.* *Slower than before*

*ff* *p* *[Theme anthem]*

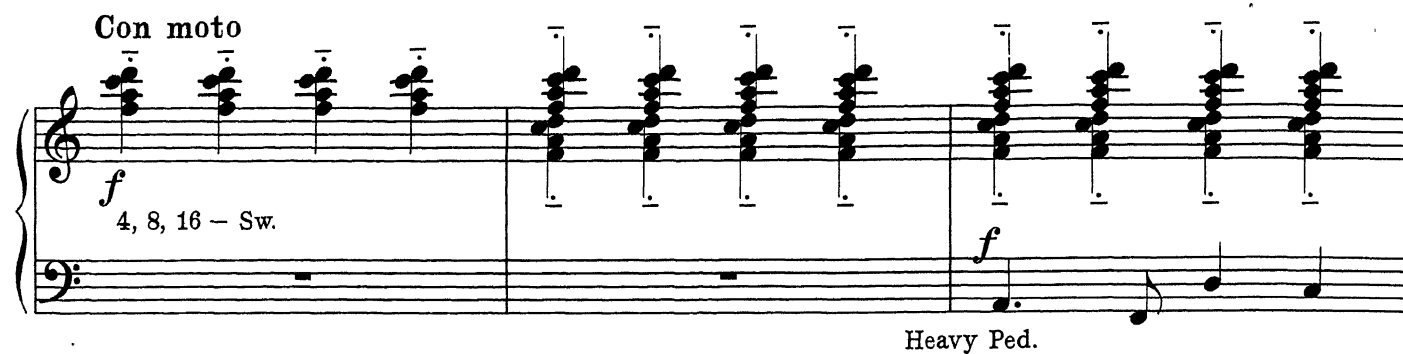
*mf* *Clar.*

*Ped.*

*rall. assai* *[Anthem]*

Or, suppose it is a festival Sunday and more brilliance is desirable.— Let us modulate from the same motif to Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*.

**Con moto**



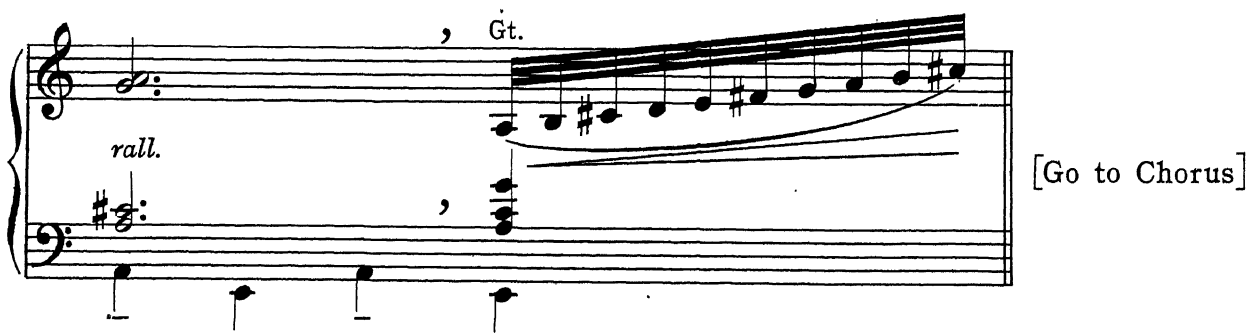
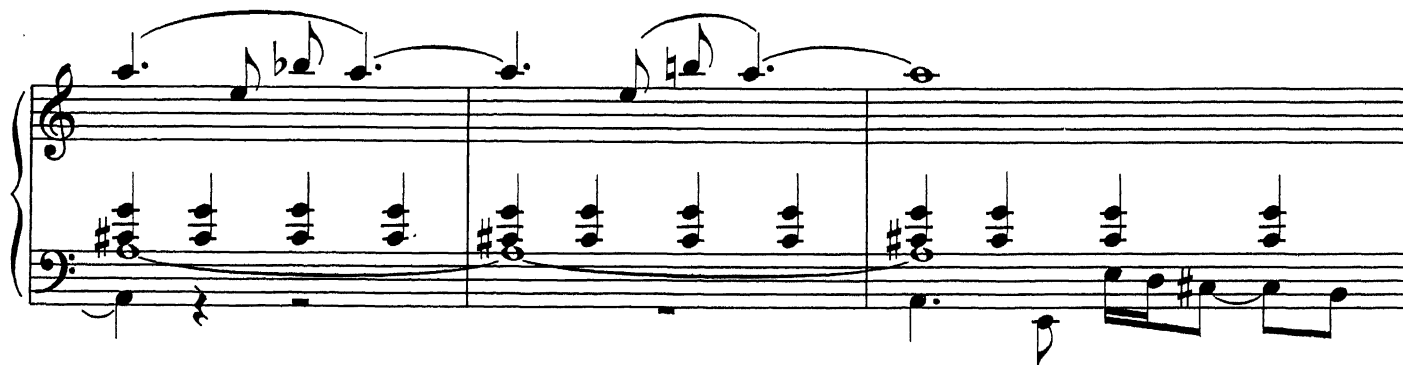
*f*  
4, 8, 16 — Sw.

*f*

Heavy Ped.



*cresc. to end*



*rall.*

Gt.

[Go to Chorus]

## CHAPTER VII

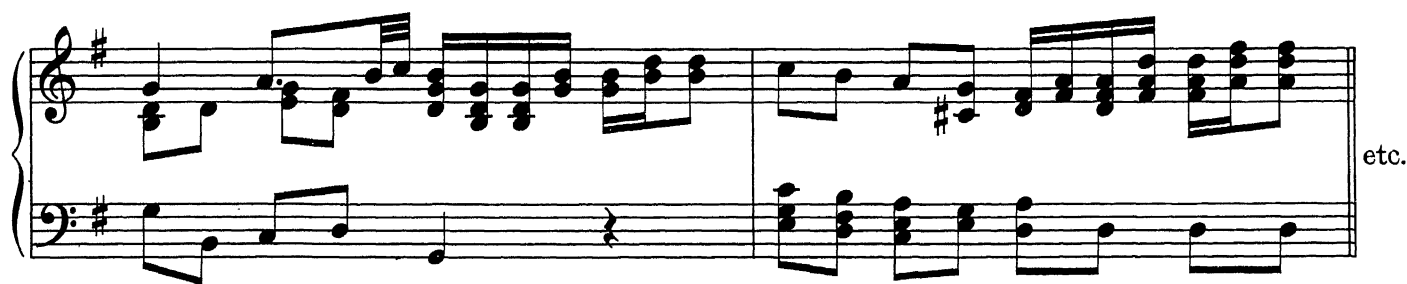
### THE PLAY ELEMENT

An example below will give an easy illustration of the so-called play element most necessary in music, but rarely talked about. The play element is that which lightens and aerates the otherwise thick and soggy harmonic scheme. The most serious composers use it and the dullest do not. [See Franck's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue for a serious example of a very serious composer, using the device as part of the scheme]. Too great a solidity is petrification. You think of bread and get stone!

Now, to our example: Handel's Song, *Where'er Ye Walk*. On a plain chord basis it would be:—



But, with the play element as style factor note the extra interest and buoyant style:—



So, one finds that style is very often the man, and that style must be studied as Harmony or Counterpoint is studied.

The play element carried on as Chopin has carried it becomes ornamentation or elaboration. But, with lesser lights, that kind is not always musical or musically necessary and may sound old-fashioned.

Now, look at Beethoven's Opus 53, (I) the Waldstein and see the 'levitation' produced by repetition of the chord and arpeggios. Play them as *solids* and you will understand the *yeast* of music. Do not 'high-hat' the lightening or easing up factors. They contribute to motion and emotion.

Notice also in "Moonlight" Sonata (III) the emotional force of the broken chords in opening theme and the contrast of the later used solid chords.



## CHAPTER VIII

# TRANSPOSITION


Up to this point no mention has been made of transposition. This, of course, is a very necessary phase of our work, but may be postponed for a few weeks. After that time the basic theme, using the many suggested sequences, should be studied in keys higher and lower by intervals increasing to a fifth. Seconds, thirds and fifths are particularly useful intervals in practice.

The American Guild of Organists requires transposition for its Fellowship degree below and above to only a third. But, for concert improvisation, it is better to include all intervals up to and including a fifth above and below.

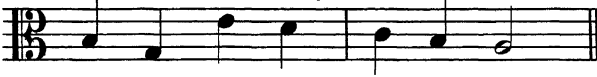
First, transpose our hymn 'by ear' or instinct or in any usual way. 1) Up one degree; 2) down one degree. Observe where sticking points are.

Second, see how notes look with different clefs, the notes on same lines, just to see the use of these clefs as transposing agents. Or, think of these notes for Clarinet as written in A, in B $\flat$ ; French Horn in F and other keys; Trumpet in F and other keys.

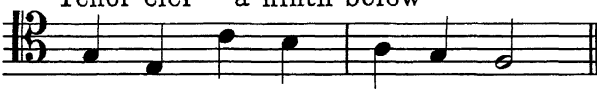
a) Treble clef




b) Alto clef— a seventh below



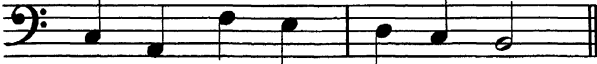
c) Tenor clef— a ninth below



d) Soprano clef— a third below



e) Bass clef— a thirteenth below



Now, third, transpose the melody only of the usual two measures, getting the 'high points' in relation to tonic and dominant.

One degree up:



and so on through keys of B, C $\sharp$ , E $\flat$ , E; after which, transpose:

- |                    |                          |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| a) one degree down | For advanced improvisers | f) perfect fourth up |
| b) minor third up  |                          | g) " " down          |
| c) " " down        |                          | h) " fifth up        |
| d) major third up  |                          | i) " " down          |
| e) " " down        |                          |                      |

- A. Transpose one melody daily.
- B. " " hymn-tune daily.
- C. " " short, easy piano piece daily,  
first at one interval, then at another.

## CHAPTER IX

### FREE IMITATION

Perhaps *Imitation*, as used in inventions, is the most important *one* thing to study and make oneself an adept in:

1) A very easy lead into the subject of imitation is through the Anna Magdalena Bach Clavecin Book, written by Bach for his second wife. Play the whole bookful!

I quote now from the Menuet. Note the exact imitation and then the free.

### Menuet

**Moderato** *cantabile*

The score consists of two systems of piano and right-hand parts. The first system begins with a piano introduction marked *mf* and *deciso*. The right hand features a melodic line with a crescendo and a fortissimo section, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The second system continues the piece, including a section marked *p* and a final section with a trill and a first/second ending. Dynamics range from *mf* to *f*, with markings for *cresc.*, *dim.*, and *rall. un poco*. Ornaments (trills) are indicated in several places, with specific fingerings provided in the bottom left.

1) 2)

2) Next, play two or three of the two part Inventions of Bach (one in C, one in F, one in a minor). After which continue in writing the following start based upon our given theme:

[illegible]

3) Write out this Invention first and then 4) improvise one.

In Bach's Toccata in D minor (not the organ work, but the Clavecin piece) the theme is developed very much as an improviser would do it.

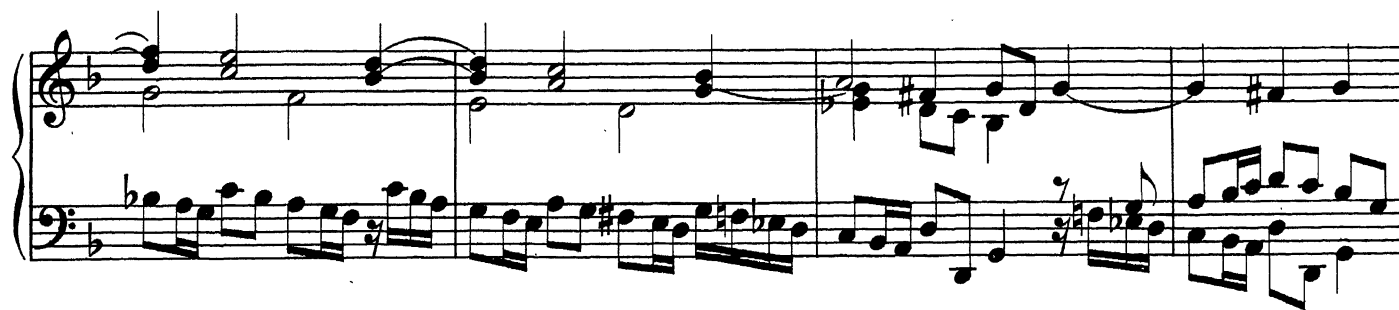
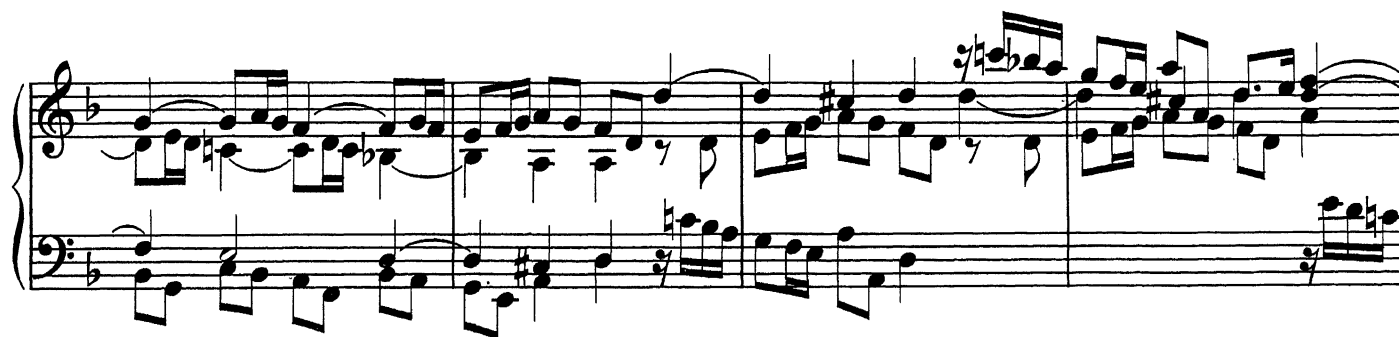
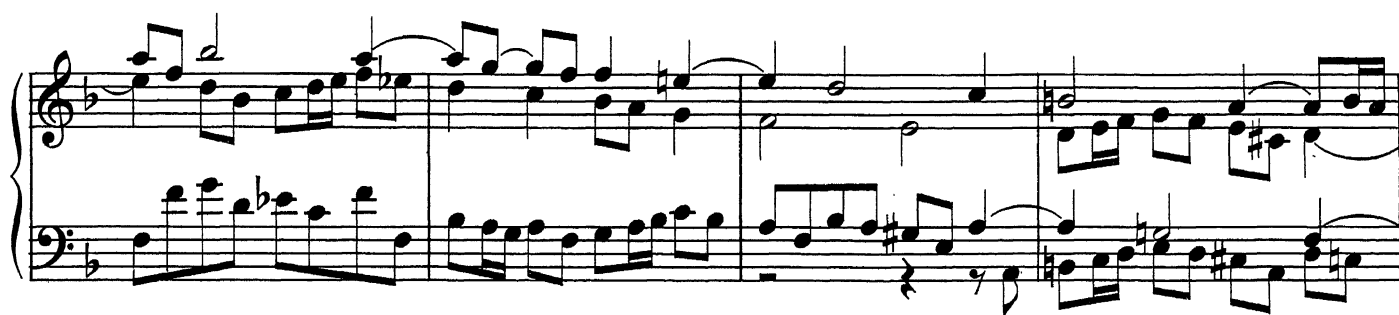
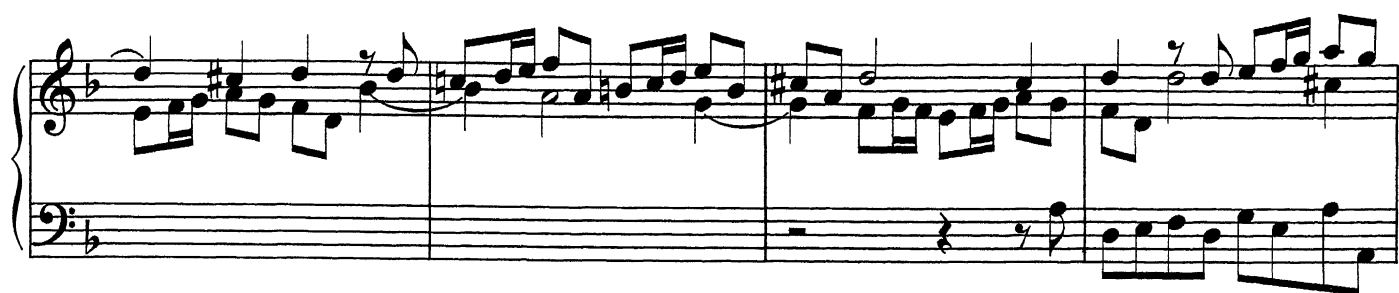
This example will form a pretty complete education in imitation. It is here quoted in part. Note the way it sticks to the idea given out in the first two measures, the variety of registers, and the balancing of motion up by motion downwards.

# Toccata in D minor

Play slowly first, then with gayety.

Play slowly first, then with gayety.

*p*



## CHAPTER X

### TWO PART CANON

The student's canons will not sound interesting for many moons, but the making of one short canon on a day— written one day and improvised another day— will bring about the concentration necessary to even elementary improvisation. Finish, in writing, the few 'starts' of canons here suggested before doing them extempore.

**Moderato**

etc.

**Slowly**

etc.

[If an organist, supply an easy sustained Pedal part to above.]

**Gaily**

etc.

etc.

**Staccato**

*pp* etc.

*f* etc.

*p* etc.

Canons may be at any interval. For example, here is one at the seventh below, with free parts, from one of the writer's short organ works:—

(Excerpt from the development)

*pp* etc.

(Pedal)

For further study of canons, if desired, see Bach's 30 Goldberg Variations, most of them canons at many different intervals. The free parts are models of their type. Violinists and pianists may care to study the Franck Violin and Piano Sonata, last movement.

## CHAPTER XI

# FACTORS IN GETTING VARIETY

No matter how interesting ideas (*themes*) are, they will not "get across" unless one has variety in the following:

- 1) legato - staccato
- 2) dynamics *ppp* - *fff* - *sfz*
- 3) variety of register (study the Bach quotation from the Toccata)
- 4) speed
- 5) rhythms:  
    strict time - rubato
- 6) pedaling - damper, sostenuto, sustaining, or no pedal at all. Or, on organ, use  
    and non-use of pedal
- 7) solid chords - broken chords
- 8) scale work - arpeggios
- 9) cadences
- 10) limited tonality - many keys

*Note to organists:*

Restudy the "assets" of your instruments. Its resources are greater than you think

- 1) Take all Diapasons alone and together
 

"	"	Reeds	"	"	"
"	"	Strings	"	"	"
"	"	Flutes	"	"	"

2) Then, take each of the above and couple with every other quality, and so on through the organ.

3) Then, re-examine the effect of all 4, 8, 16 and 32 foot couplers on each and every quality of tone possessed by the organ.

The above restudy nearly always produces a fifty per cent increase in new effects.

## CHAPTER XII

### EMBELLISHMENTS

The player will make a close study of all the currently used embellishments. Then, when he feels the need of putting in turns and trills etc. let him think twice before doing it. These devices rarely are needed. They never take the place of a good theme and scheme, and never deceive the ear for a moment. It is only a little musical "finger wave"

A small music dictionary will serve as a perfectly adequate basis. The Nieck's dictionary has excellent material and explanations.

The embellishments in the Beethoven Sonatas, as edited by von Bülow, will cover all but archaic symbols. The author believes that notation and explanation in a piece of music is better than "three in the bush" of words!

But, again, use embellishments sparingly and always *con amore*. They otherwise are just foolish and indicate "inflation." In the eighteenth century there was an embellishment epidemic.



## CHAPTER XIII

# IMPROVISATION IN ACCOMPANYING

To the writer, songs never should have improvised connecting links. Their arrangement should be so contrasted and dove-tailed that all other music is superfluous. [See in Schumann's "Papillons" the juxtaposition of tonalities without bridge making.]

However, not all players feel this way. So, a brief statement of the case is that the accompanist can make the following use of improvisation:

- 1) To provide transitions from one piece to another when key changes— to him — are sudden;
- 2) To quiet a more or less socially inclined audience at the beginning of groups.

Concerning the first point the good practice always is to use a motif from the just finished song, making a simple modulation out of it *at à different register*. A slight weaving of a motif from the new song may be used effectively. After which— a slight pause. Concerning the second point use either the motif from the song to come or the simplest kind of chords. Preferably the latter. But, again, a— *pause*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WORKS TO ANALYSE

It is of the highest importance to "go on a tour" of much music which will offer the improviser fertile and generative methods. Play slowly such works and "listen" with your mind, heart and ear. Ask some such questions as these:

- Where does the register of the melody lie?
- What is its thick- throughness, or transparency?
- Where are the inversions of the theme used?
- Is there any augmentation or diminution?
- Homophonic or polyphonic?
- Form rigid or flexible?
- Are there different subjects or does all proceed from a single germ with subject contrast?
- What is the nature of the second subject?
- Of the episodes and transitions?
- Nature and number of cadences?
- Styles of accompaniment?

One cannot get a good "method" without consultation of hundreds of plans.

Music suggested for daily reference will be something like the following for best efficiency:

Beethoven's Thirty-Two Piano Sonatas

Bach's English Suites

Bach's Choral-Preludes

Bach's Well-Tempered Clavichord

Brahms' Sonata in F minor

Or, for violinists, the Brahms' Three Violin Sonatas

Franck's Violin and Piano Sonata.

For organists,

Franck's Three Chorales

Widor's Symphonies, at least V & VI

Handel's Organ Concertos

(very usable extempore playing technique. Built largely the way an improviser thinks).

//

I am confident that it will be of considerable aid to illustrate the way I use these works by a few analyses from the standpoint of stimulating ideas.

Examine the following Beethoven Piano Sonatas for style:

Op. 31, No. 3, Allegretto vivace. Note staccato left hand.

Op. 53, I, for staccato chord effect. Economical upbuilding at end:— Rondo for playful arpeggio figure.

Op. 57, II, theme for chord usage. Note same chords as broken up in the variations. Last movement, note figure of Rondo made out of *arpeggio and scale*, a fine generating scheme. Only four different types of chord used. Closeness of texture and marvelous growth of idea, especially in I.

Op. 106, I, for thesis of subject in chords, with antithesis in three parts and extended. Construction very original. Scherzo of same has three styles, very difficult to manage.

Op. 109, I— lyric theme alternating with recitative.

III— Variation V has polyphonic treatment with fine staccato and legato effects.

Op. 110, I, good example Sonata— form without a second subject. Fugue is interrupted by a lyric passage, after which inversion is used.

Op. 111, Arietta and Variations have new and interesting and skillfully merged rhythms.

John C. Holliday's "Jack-in-the Green" (Schirmer) has a "neat" presentation of melody in bass and then used as top. Note how easy, yet it "sounds".

For another example of melody first alone and then harmonized, see MacDowells' Indian Suite.

Grieg's Album-Leaf, Op. 28, No. 3, is a good example of monotonous\* rhythm made un-monotonous by change in harmony, position, and style.

Samuel Rousseau's *Double Theme for Organ* gives fine theme treatment suitable for folk song basis.

Chopin's Ballade, Op. 38.

Lovely simplicity of theme.

Note development of idea, which is highly organized, without becoming too "mental".

Chopin's Fantasie, Op. 49.

Note variety of style in composition, style in piano technic.

Notice— as one proceeds— 1) octaves, 2) solidity, 3) octaves, 4) solidity, 5) obvious melody with staccato chords, 6) arpeggios and scales, 7) broken chord accompaniment, 8) melody in double notes etc., etc.

The surface texture is a very vital part of every composition. Great example, this.

Bach's 48! Talk about a style show!


\*See also *Music to the Listening Ear*, by Will Earhart, page 146 (Witmark)

For Toccata models, see Widor's Fifth Symphony, Dubois' in G and Mulet's "Tu es Petrus."

Handel's March from Occasional Oratorio is fine easy March model. The first movement gives ideal Overture design.

Rheinberger's Sonata over Eighth Tone gives simple treatment of Gregorian Theme. The fugue is beautiful example of combining of fugue subject and theme from first movement.

Franck's Three Chorales for Organ and Symphony in D minor will reveal his special gift of expansion of one theme into the large unit. Franck never uses a useless figure. All is germane. Always, *always*, *always* related. That is also the cue to one's best work in improvisation.

Paul Hindemith's Tanzstücke No. 1 will provide the modernist with a usable scheme. Note how  provide three pages of merry going. Several of the other examples also give delightful "splutterfuss" over nothing in particular.

Consult also "Paeans" (No. 1) by Rudhyar ("New Music"); New England Sonata (The "Alcott" movement) by Charles E. Ives (privately printed) which contains both a Beethoven motive and a Scotch hymn.

See also Ravel's Ballet "Daphnis" from "Daphnis and Chloé" (Durand et Cie.); Milhaud's "Laranjeiras" (Max Eschig et Cie.); Mortimer Wilson's "Silhouettes from the Screen" (Composers' Music Corporation); Arnold Schoenberg's "Six Little Pieces" Opus 19. (Universal Edition); Jacques Ibert's "La cage de crystal"; Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition"; Zatacwitsch's "Chant des Kazak", Part 13; Stcherbatcheff's "Choeur Dansé"; Shostakovich's "Preludes", Nos. 3 & 4.

#### Note:

The text of this work may be applied to the needs of the modern dance accompanist by first developing the theme as given on Page 3 to secure the working technique. Then, by taking a given motif from a modern or ancient dance theme and spin into set or evolving forms (see Page 37). Third, by becoming familiar with the structures and types of dance music used by choreographers and improvising within those structures and types. A similar method may be of distinct advantage to pianists and organists who "ply their trade" in radio studios.

## CHAPTER XV

# HOMOPHONIC IMPROVISATION and FUN

In order to become a good extempore player it occasionally is necessary to have a good time by improvising unseriously some easy types.

Up to this part only melodic (polyphonic) work has been used, for the reasons already given, and also because a harmony is most far reaching when it results largely from the continued use of parts, best thought being horizontal rather than vertical.

Books of Folk Songs, with the melody only given, form a special stimulus. I suggest Slavic or Hungarian, German or French— or Indian— makes a good starting point— or ending place, for that matter.

In this freer, more homophonic and of less mental nature (after the mind is tired of the spinning and weaving processes) use “hunks” of themes instead of expansion of melodies. In this type set the form rather arbitrarily in advance and then allow it to vary as one goes on, if inspiration so guide.

### SOMETHING ABOUT HARMONY

The basis of chords (Harmony) is the *harmonic* series:—



Find out how many of the usual chords may be made out of, say, the first nine or ten notes. Some of the newer chords are based upon the upper *harmonics*.

Most desirous improvisors will have heard of certain prohibitions in harmony such as consecutive octaves and fifths. But, that means only when the pattern or scheme is of the older type. Whenever one thinks in four part harmony (which belongs to counterpoint) one must have a care to avoid these parallels.

But, suppose one's scheme is *based* on parallel fifths or parallel octaves like the example from the writer's *Choral Triptych*,\* then it would be incorrect *not* to have the fifths and octaves.

Very slowly

God\_ laughed from ver - y depths of love. Ah!

God\_ laughed from ver - y depths of love. Ah!

God\_ laughed from ver - y depths of love. Ah!

God\_ laughed from ver - y depths of love. Ah!

Very slowly

pp ppp pppp

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Now, proceed to the free improvisations with different styles to select from. Complete the following 'starts'.

First, take an accompaniment in the R. H. made out of our well worn theme, with the melody following in L. H.

As, 1)

*ff vigorously*

*ff*

etc.

2) Arpeggio style, melody included.

*pp*

etc.

[Make three more types.]

3) A specially fine way to get stimulus, to get juice out of nothing, is to put some spicy, pungent rhythm in front of you, following its rhythmic and structural lead until your own ideas come, that seem your *very own*.

For example, base piece upon MacDowell's "Wild Rose" plan. Use same series of notes:-

*p*

Repeat 8<sup>va</sup> higher.  
Then similarly put  
in second subject.

*p*

B (d minor)

Repeat A

Short Coda

[Also, base piece upon Chopin's Preludes Nos. 7 & 20, and upon his Nocturne in F#.]

4) Also, make six free harmonizations of the Gauntlett hymn, somewhat as follows:—

1) *[4, 8, 16]* etc.

2) *non legato*  
*p* *f legato* etc.

3) *ff* etc.

Pedal

4) *f* Fill in and continue etc.

Heavy Pedal

5) *f* etc.





5) Choose types of accompaniment for homophonic style, as below—



and also this same exercise in various keys with four flats, two and three sharps, using the usual seven notes.

6) Now, get gay once in a while and make up a Hornpipe, à la Edward German (Four English Dances).



(Ancient Hornpipe was in *triple* time.) Build one over Purcell's *Hornpipe*.

7) Next, try a Waltz, an old time Cake Walk, a Jazz trifle— on either some subject or no subject whatever. Getting 'hot air' out of one's system is to keep repressions out and expression in. [See the Hindemith work referred to in Section XIV.]

---

Marcel Proust says: "Like those expressive themes composed by musicians of genius which paint in splendid colors the glow of fire, the rush of water, the peace of fields and woods, to audiences who, having first let their eyes run over the program, have their imaginations trained in the right direction."

These fine words give the reason for a player's using a title in case inspiration gives a good one. So, here are some subjects suggested to get the student started:

Winter—	1st Subject low register—	2nd Subject medium high register
Spring—	high—	medium low
Juggler—	very high—	very low
Love—	sonorous throughout	
Hate—	strident and high—	strident and low
Sunrise etc., etc.,	with a new subject each day.	

The problems of register are stressed because so little attention is paid to it. Analyse well the interesting shifting of position in the great writers. [See Schumann's *Fantasie*, Opus 17, for stirring examples.]

### SPECIAL HARMONIZATIONS

Make short studies in improvising pieces

- a) using minor chords only;
- b) using major chords only;
- c) using seventh (dominant and secondary) chords only;
- d) using combinations of the above.

8) A favorite and easily schemed effect in accompaniment may be modelled after "The Sleigh,"\* a song by Richard Kountz, in some such manner:—

#### Allegro molto

The musical score is for a piano accompaniment piece titled "The Sleigh" by Richard Kountz. It is marked "Allegro molto". The score consists of two systems of music, each with a piano (right hand) and bass (left hand) staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first system begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piano part features a series of chords and moving lines, while the bass part provides a steady accompaniment. The second system begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and continues the musical theme. The score concludes with the word "etc." indicating it is a short study.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### PLANNED THOUGHT

The beginning and end of the work of a skillful improviser— as every reader will see by this time— is planned thought; blueprints of action.

It is difficult to tell the point at which thought merges into emotion, and emotion into thought. There is no definite line of demarcation. So, it behooves the player to *feel* all he can and to think “till it hurts”.

Some one defined a genius as one whose emotions and intelligence function equally and synchronously. Bearing this in mind, the student will develop himself all-roundedly.

A good practical rule is: To train the intelligence to take consideration of all possible phases of a theme and the emotions will take care of themselves.

In other words, before any person have magic he must have a digested plan or pre-conceived design. The mind plans. The emotions give urge.

A thing may be mathematically fit, but emotionally spineless— or, the reverse. But, urge and surge are below and beyond the intellect. So, thought plus feeling form a perfect working team, cooperating always.

Always keep in the foreground of your mind the following:— *For the first few months do all the “laboratory work” on each selected theme before improvisation is done in extenso.*

Also, *all extemporisers of the first rank keep a procedure in readiness to take the place of a doubtfully present inspiration.*

Inspiration is not always so accommodating as one wishes. It doesn't sit on one's shoulder ready to descend like a dove. So, as earlier suggested, a planned and mentally fit blueprint is used. This often leads to fresh ideas coming forward; and, always, at any rate prevents stupidity when “juice” fails to flow.

After the student has made all the studies for, and has fully extemporised upon “our” set tune he should follow some such plan:—

- 1) Select a tune;
- 2) Study possibilities of the first two or three measures in *all* the indicated ways (until the tune has completely soaked in);
- 3) Reharmonize the hymn or tune in the ways indicated and also put eighth note motion in Alto, then in Tenor, then in Bass;

4) Play whole melody backwards, making the rhythm interesting at "dead" spots and then harmonize in two ways with this "crab" inversion;

- 5) Treat whole tune in: a) minor, if in major;  
b) major, if in minor.

6) Study with Pedal. Points at top and bottom;

7) Make short theme out of the tune, using free accompaniment;

8) Make second theme out of new, unused measures; then, return to first theme;

9) Make a March, Sarabande, Toccata out of same basic idea, taking (as earlier suggested) a typical model.

10) As one daily exercise use imitation in rotating parts, moving the "two against one" or "three against one" from one voice to another. That is, place against the, largely, quarter notes of the melody eighth notes in the other voices. ["Two to one", "Three to one", etc. is a term used in Counterpoint to indicate number of notes in the counterpoint, or secondary melody, against the Cantus Firmus, or chief melody.]

The above plan is a good working design for every chosen theme.

Each week the student will make a thorough study of one new form, analysing and playing and improvising in that form. The study of, say, the Beethoven Minuets and Scherzos will reveal unsuspected variations in design which will open up new vistas of ideas.

Perhaps the order best for the elementary student in tackling forms (letting A or B or C each represent a theme) is to build:-

- a) Piece based on just one subject, as A (See Chopin's Prelude, No. 7);
- b) Piece based on A, B Chopin's Prelude, No. 20);
- c) Piece based on A-B-A Coda (MacDowell's To A Wild Rose);
- d) Piece based on A-B-A-C-D-C-A-B-A (Beethoven's Minuet, Op. 2 No. 1) [From this point on, Concert Extemporisation];
- e) Pieces based on Rondos (Beethoven has about six varieties);
- f) Pieces based on Sonata Form.

After these homophonic forms have been well assimilated the polyphonic forms will be carried on as in Chapters 20, 21 and 22.

Evolving forms also should be used—especially in church service extemporisation. An evolving form is a form which is complete after a predecided plan of development is worked out. As a rule, there is but one short motif developed, but that is only when the piece is short, or of medium length. A form that is *not a set form* is complete and satisfactory when its material has been evolved to the utmost of a simple clarity.

## CHAPTER XVII

# THE ORGANIST and the CHURCH SERVICE

All the preceding pages will of course hold good for any kind of an improviser, whatever his job. But, to be of special use to the organist in church playing a few more paragraphs will help.

First essential: *Keep on organ console during service the notes of the theme chosen for the day, written out with or without bars and clefs in single notes.* Nothing else on sheet. Theme to be chosen, of course, from hymn or anthem or chant or organ work. Preferably from hymn or anthem.

As his one great contribution to the church service the organist has a double function:

- a) to unify the various parts of the service; and
- b) to render the atmosphere more penetrating, unfolding the moods which should be dominant for the day. In other words, *one theme, one mood.*

The organist should apply all suggested methods of study to the melodies in the music of the following Sunday. Only then can he "let loose" and give radiance to his work.

Improvisation will not spontaneously come to one, any more than an organist can play at sight in public Widor's Tenth Symphony and make it mean anything emotionally.

Every organist should study a Bach Choral-Prelude each week, playing it twice and then each voice alone and with every other voice. Do this as long as you are an organist and ideas will come fast; so fast and strong that they may force you to write down *your* ideas.

At any rate, it is the radiance of the player that counts in his immortality.

## CHAPTER XVIII

# GREGORIAN MUSIC

This subject is approached with feelings almost of misgiving arising from the fact that the field is so vast, the procedure so widely at variance with the handling of modern tonalities, the literature so incredibly rich and the *metier* so far removed from that type of emotional expression which modern tonality has been built up to voice. Whatever can be put into a book of this kind can be offered only as suggestive. In other words, modal and liturgical music is a complete subject, a subject almost entirely separate from music as we understand it today, and one that should be studied under proper tutelage. There are worthy and adequate teachers and schools for this purpose approved by the acknowledged repository of Gregorian music, namely, the Roman Catholic Church. For the subject of modal harmonization, the student is referred to "Mediaeval Modes" by Dr. A. Madeley Richardson (Gray). For a concise and practical handbook on Gregorian music in all its phases, the student is referred to "The Complete Method of Gregorian Chant" by Dom Gregory Sunol. As a source book of the musical literature, the "Liber Usualis," see P. 44 (procurable from J. Fischer & Bro., New York) is probably the most practical compilation.

However, (and bearing in mind the foregoing qualifications), some direction of the student's attention toward the music itself is important here. The following will serve to illustrate the eight ecclesiastical modes in Gregorian notation with corresponding modern notation. The *finals* and *dominants* of each mode are indicated in one case by open *neums*, in the other by open notes— the *final*, of course, being the lower indicated note.

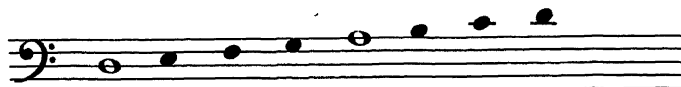
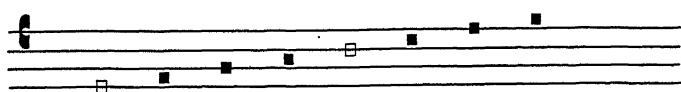
### The Ecclesiastical Modes

#### NEUM NOTATION

#### MODERN NOTATION

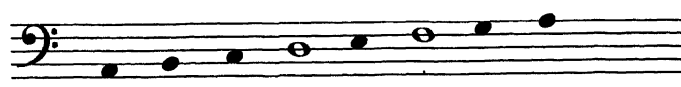
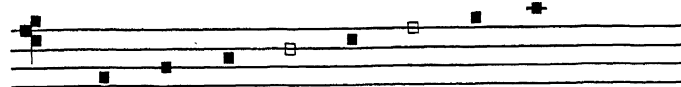
##### MODE I

Dorian (Authentic)



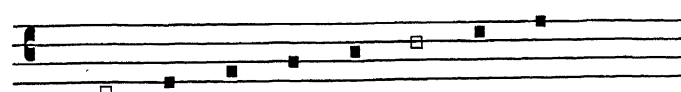
##### MODE II

Hypodorian (Plagal)



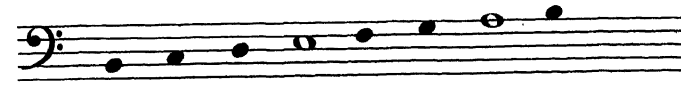
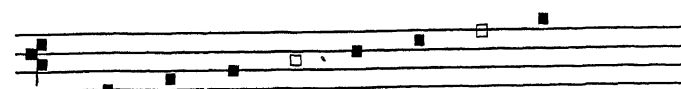
##### MODE III

Phrygian (Authentic)

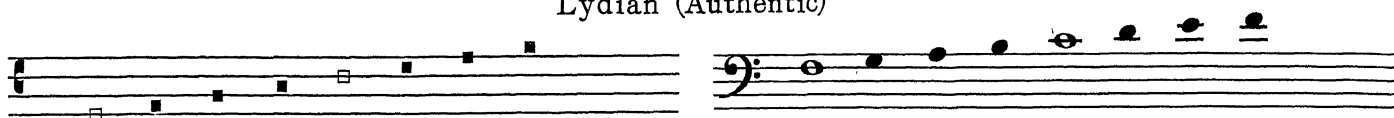


##### MODE IV

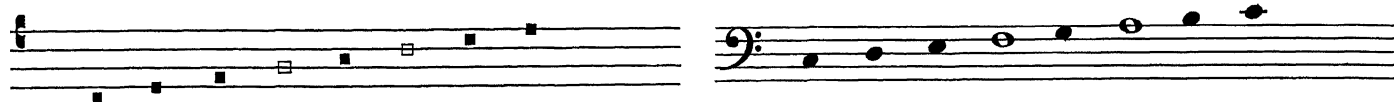
Hypophrygian (Plagal)



# MODE V Lydian (Authentic)



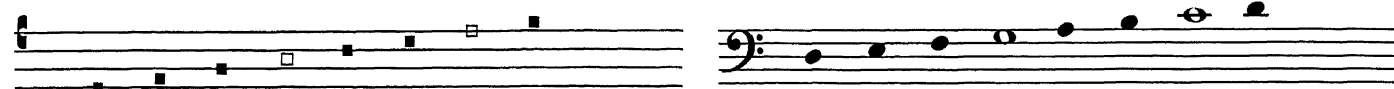
# MODE VI Hypolydian (Plagal)








# MODE VII Mixolydian (Authentic)



# MODE VIII Hypomixolydian (Plagal)



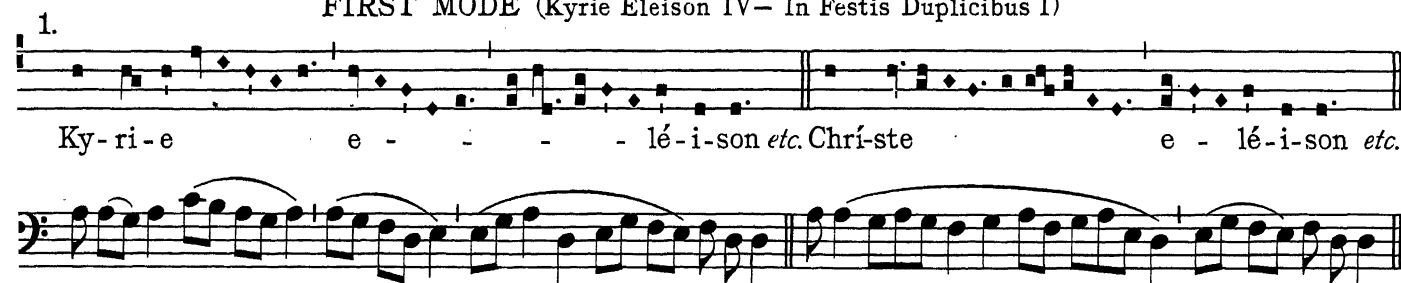
Note the similarity in note sequence between the Dorian (Mode I) and the Hypomixolydian (Mode VIII). The differences in the Finals and Dominants are responsible for the marked difference in character.

Of particular importance in reading Gregorian notation is the *clef*, two varieties of which are used: the C Clef  and the F Clef . Both of these clefs are movable for convenience in notation similar to our movable C clef  of today). The pitch of the Gregorian C and F is respectively  and .

I append eight examples, one in each of the eight modes, using in each case a *Kyrie Eleison* in both Gregorian and modern notation. Observe that the modern notation gives actual sounds for the first four, the remaining four are transposed to the octave, in the G clef— a style which prevails in modernized editions of Gregorian music. Following these melodies are three authorized harmonizations of the first sentence from the first *Kyrie*.

## FIRST MODE (Kyrie Eleison IV— In Festis Duplicibus I)

1.



## SECOND MODE (Kyrie Eleison— Cantus ad libitum III)

2.



## THIRD MODE (Kyrie Eleison—II— In Festis Solemnibus I)

3.

Ky - ri - e e - lé - i - son etc.

Chri - - - ste e - lé - i - son etc.

## FOURTH MODE (Kyrie Eleison—III— In Festis Solemnibus II)

4.

Ky - ri - e e - lé - i - son etc. Chri - ste e - lé - i - son etc.

## FIFTH MODE (Kyrie Eleison VIII— In Festis Duplicibus V)

5.

Ky - ri - e e - - - lé - i - son Chri - ste e - - - lé - i - son etc.

## SIXTH MODE (Kyrie Eleison—XVII— In Dominicis Adventus et Quadragesimae)

6.

Ky - ri - e e - - - - - lé - i - son Chri - ste e - - - - - lé - i - son etc.

## SEVENTH MODE (Kyrie Eleison—VI— In Festis Duplicibus III)

7.

Ky - ri - e e - - - - - lé - i - son Chri - ste e - - - - - lé - i - son etc.



## EIGHTH MODE (Kyrie Eleison—I— Tempore Paschali)

8.

Ky - ri - e e - lé - i - son Chri - ste e - - lé - i - son etc.

## I) Kyrie Eleison IV

F. X. Mathias

Ex "Organum Comitans ad Kyriale  
seu Ordinarium Missae"

## I) Kyrie Eleison IV

Rev. L. Manzetti

Ex "Organum Comitans ad Kyriale  
seu Ordinarium Missae"

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## I) Kyrie Eleison IV

Julius Bas

Ex "Organum Comitans ad Kyriale  
seu Ordinarium Missae"

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The two following quotations will serve to illustrate a freer style in Gregorian melodic structure.

## 3. (Third Mode)

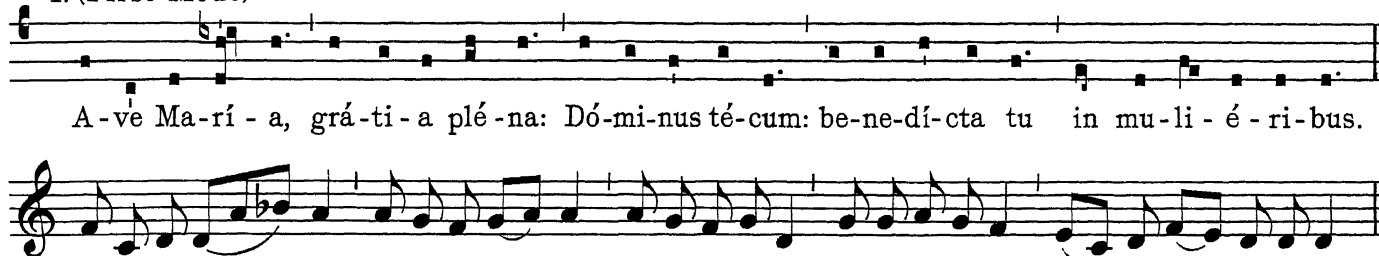
## PANGE LINGUA (In Festo Corporis Christi)

Pan - ge lín - gua glo - ri - ó - si Cór - po - ris mys - té - ri - um, San - gui - nís - que pre - ti - ó - si,  
Quem in mún - di pré - ti - um Fru - ctus ven - tris ge - ne - ró - si Rex ef - fú - dit gén - ti - um.

\* Note divergence of rhythmic pointing in each version.

## AVE MARIA (Festa Octobris 7) (In II Vesperis)

## 1. (First Mode)



## Studies in Mode Extemporization

The writer believes the following points are the essentials to be kept in mind by the improviser:—

- 1) That the purity of each mode is a necessary basis to a strongly defined character;
- 2) Mixing of the modes is, of course, a neutralizing of effect and a weakening of individual mode character. If desirable however, do it as simply and unobtrusively as possible, planning the effect in advance;
- 3) In all harmonizations (homophonic), use only simple triads and first inversions of the same, using the seventh, ninth, eleventh and thirteenth as passing and auxiliary notes and not as essential parts of the chord;
- 4) Always keep in mind the essentially melodic character of all the traditional "tunes." Thus one can construct a piece strictly polyphonically, with the various melodies synchronously producing harmony that will usually be in keeping, provided one has Mozart's idea of a good "ear, eye and heart";
- 5) The essential differences in the modes lie in the location of the half steps, plus the nature of the finals and dominants, which latter make such a great difference between the opulent church modes and the limiting major and minor scales;
- 6) Modes may be transposed to any desired pitch, but the relationships must always be preserved. For example the Dorian (First Mode) is based on *D*. Based on *C*, the scale becomes *c-d-e<sup>b</sup>-f-g-a-b<sup>b</sup>-c*;
- 7) The dominants are the reciting notes of the chant. They *dominate*. The finals are notes for endings;
- 8) To the organist harmonizing, the finals suggest the chord endings. Note that the finals of each pair of modes are the same, while the dominants differ;
- 9) *B* and *B<sup>b</sup>* are almost equally ancient usage;
- 10) As stated by Father Rossini of St. Paul's Cathedral, Pittsburgh, Pa., "each of the Gregorian melodies in use in the Catholic Liturgy is built from beginning to end upon a single scale or mode which has been preferred by the composer to the other seven as the better suited to express the meaning of the text. During the development of his piece the composer sometimes might have invaded the field belonging to a "relative" scale or mode, but never enough so as to *change* the original modality of the piece"—
- 11) Also, "in Gregorian Chant, because of the absence of any harmony, there is nothing that may be compared with what we call *modulation*. There are only some sorts of cadences or codas, at the end of some Gregorian pieces by which the return passage to the beginning of the same piece is made easier for the singer in case the chant should be repeated."

With the foregoing thought stresses the improviser may proceed to the studies, keeping in mind that *in the purity and simplicity of the treatment of the modes lies strength*.

## Procedure

- 1) First make a complete study of the general principles laid down in the preceding chapters;
- 2) Second, study a given "modal" theme in the manner developed in these earlier chapters;
- 3) For excellent simple material upon which to base studies in the beginning, I would suggest the "St. Gregory Hymnal," especially Nos. 221, 265 (line 1), 267 (at the words "Patrem omnipotentem"), 200<sup>b</sup> (the old Arcadelt tune. See Liszt's arrangement for piano), 233<sup>e</sup>, 234 (notice harmonies. It is according to the Vatican Edition of the Antiphonale), 269 and 216;
- 4) Now, build upon each of these hymns and chants 6, then 7, 8, 12 and 16 measure phrases, keeping the idea of deriving closely all ideas from the *motif* chosen from each hymn or chant; after facility is established in the above, we may proceed to the *motifs* in the original type of staff, clefs and notes. Any authorized book of the kind will do, particularly the *Liber Usualis* previously referred to;
- 5) Build upon each of the *Kyrie* melodies quoted, first, short extensions of the chosen notes; then drawn out, extended and developed polyphonically, to three minutes, five minutes and ten minutes in length so as to suit every purpose. Finally create out of them specific works in free style, as a Toccata, Marche Pontificale, Canon, etc., as suggested in the previous sections. Examine closely the variety of *contours* in these ancient melodies — and follow suit!

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) The Complete Method of Gregorian Chant— Dom Gregory Sunol. (Desclée & Co., Tournai);
- 2) The Mediaeval Modes— A. Madeley Richardson (Gray);
- 3) A brief article on "Gregorian Accompaniment" by Frederick W. Goodrich— (American Organist— June, 1933);
- 4) Counterpoint— Charles W. Pearce (for rules on progressions);
- 5) The St. Gregory Hymnal— Nicola Montani (St. Gregory Guild, Philadelphia);
- 6) Dorian Prelude, for organ— Bruce Symonds (Oxford University Press);
- 7) Concerto Gregoriano— Ottorino Respighi;
- 8) Three Preludes based on Gregorian Themes— Respighi (Universal Edition);
- 9) Ninth (Gothic) and Tenth (Romane) Symphonies for Organ— Widor (Hamellet Edition);
- 10) The Art of Accompanying Plain Chant— Max Springer (J. Fischer & Bro.);
- 11) A New School of Gregorian Chant— Rev. Dom Johnner, O. S. B. (Pustet);
- 12) Liber Usualis— Desclée, ho. 801
- 13) Organum Comitans ad Kyriale seu Ordinarium Missae— F. X. Mathias (Pustet);
- 14) Organum Comitans ad Kyriale seu Ordinarium Missae— L. Manzetti (J. Fischer & Bro.);
- 15) Organum Comitans ad Kyriale seu Ordinarium Missae— Julius Bas (Desclée et Socii).

## PART TWO

### CHAPTER XIX

## CONCERT IMPROVISATION

*Da Vinci said: "Without good and solid theory one can do little in the 'hazards' of painting"— which applies to all the Arts.*

### PREAMBLE

Since nearly all the early pianists and organists were also composers, and since music did not circulate widely, men made their own music. Sometimes it was for the moment; when it was, of course, *improvisation*. These extempore works usually became written down music. (See Bach's "Musical Offering")

So, we find Bach, Beethoven, Hummel, Abt Vogler (who made thunderstorms until the milk turned sour for miles around!), Mozart, Chopin, Wesley, Guilmant, Bonnet, Widor, Franck, and others fitting the composing faculty to service or recital needs.

In the early days of music we find improvisation a living thing. It has now become almost a dead issue. We must once more make it alive.

After hearing Hummel improvise, von Weber wrote: "He used, with masterly control, figures of all kinds in a supremely logical way in innumerable positions. One could not be more pure and exact in a notated work than he was on this occasion."

*Concert Improvisation* opens up a wide field in which few caper brilliantly. It presupposes an extensive knowledge of, and intimate acquaintance with, all the homophonic and polyphonic forms and usages. The Sonata and the Suite, the Canon and the Fugue must be at ones' finger tips. In our progress so far, some of the homophonic forms have been studied. Also the two-part Canon. It is now necessary to study Variations, the Choral Prelude, the Three-Part Canon, Fugue and the homophonic forms of the Suite, Sonata and Symphony. Also Special Scales.

## CHAPTER XX VARIATIONS

As preliminary study play slowly Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 26, I and the very fine Variations Serieuses of Mendelssohn. This latter work possesses the continuity demanded by the best of this type.

Variations do not need to be the same length, nor the same key. Just keep some constant variety of figure based upon contour: one figure to each variation.

1) Notice in Chopin's early variations on a theme "Je vends des scapulaires" by Ludovic, the following melodic variants, a very usable method for the improviser:



Var. I



Var. II



Var. IV



2) Invent continuations of the variations.

Theme of hymn is:—



Var. I



Var. II à la gigue



3) Improvise seven more melodic variants, using variations in L.H. as well as in R.H.

*Note:*— It is important to develop melodic thought in the two hands equally at all times.

\*This melody happens to contain the notes used in our hymn.

## 4) Improvise variations from these 'starts'.

Theme may be:—

a)

continue

Or:—

b)

continue

Or, start in single notes, thus:—

c)

continue

Then, in chunks, staccato:—

etc.

5) a) Put the above in two sharps;

b) " " " " five flats.

6) Here is a start with our theme, over a Beethoven idea from Op. 109:

continue

7) See Mendelssohn's Sonata VI. Notice solid Chorale, the aeration of theme in the first variation, the fine moving bass in the second and the exquisite featheriness of the third. This is how the third would sound:

etc.

8) Compare the effect of our theme harmonized in the following tonal schemes.

D D minor pure

*f* *p* 4'-8'-16'

[Harmonize]

D minor harmonic D minor melodic

Dorian (with B natural)

etc.

Whole Tone

*pp*

etc.

## Pentatonic Scale



The above mode experience is very important in the growth of one's imagination.

9) The *Basso Ostinato* may well be taken up now. See Arensky's *Basso Ostinato* for Piano and then use the usual theme as a basis, in this form:

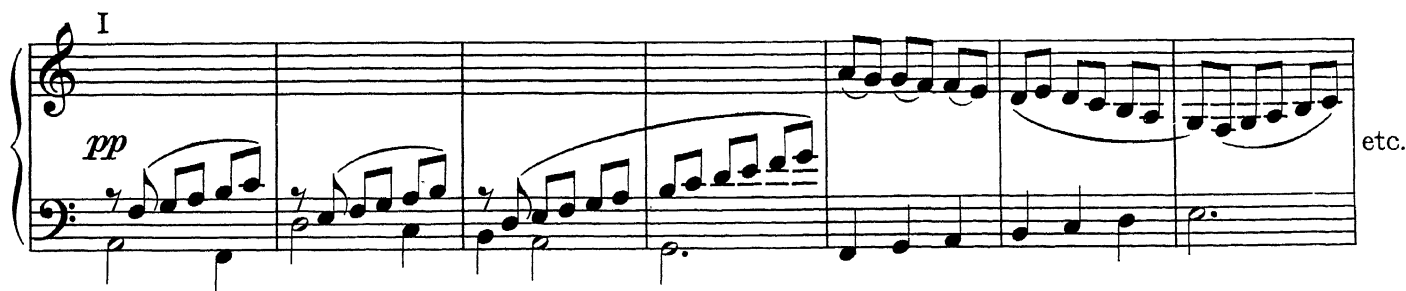
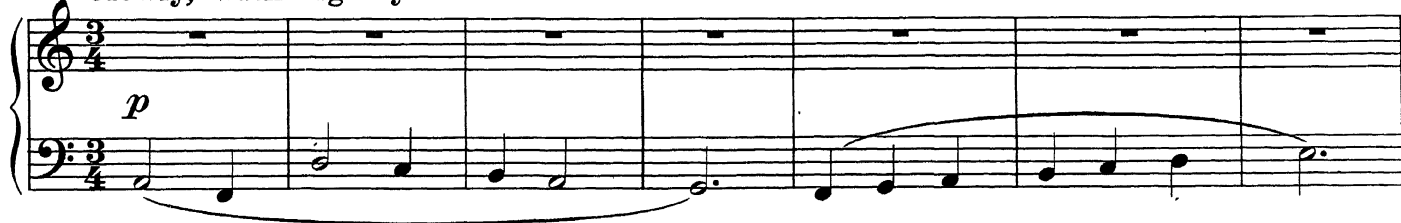


10) The *Passacaglia* is the highest type of composition based on variants. It is an extension of the *Basso Ostinato*. While the writer suggests that this be taken up only after *Fugue* is studied, it properly belongs in this section as a type.

Examine Gustav Merkel's *Passacaglia*, for Organ, in B minor and the greatest of all such forms, the Bach organ work in C minor. If possible, hear the orchestral treatment of this *Passacaglia*. Note the figure development and register variety.

After which analysis, base improvisation upon this variant of the usual theme.

## Slowly, with dignity





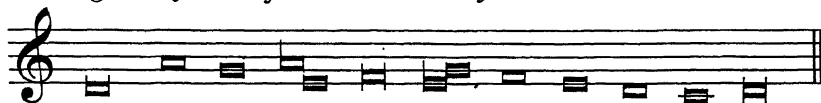
## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CHORAL PRELUDE

Keep in mind for the  $n^{\text{th}}$  time the constant importance to the improvising faculty of deriving material from a few notes:— the budding and blossoming method.

It will be of interest as well as importance to examine the following old examples taken from Martin Fischer's great work on the seventeenth century.\* (See Bibliography)

1) *Original form of the old melody.*



2) *Derivatives:*



It will now be well to quote from Walter Rummel's piano adaptation of a Pachelbel (1635-1706) Choral Prelude over *Vom Himmel Hoch*.

Take the figure he uses and place under it our omnipresent theme. The Pachelbel figure is not 'far off' and is a delight of a scheme.



Develop the figure first, as an exercise for 8 measures and then improvise with the usual theme below.

Next, take up Bach's Orgel-Büchlein and the other Chorale Preludes, using two or three as models for improvisation.

See Karg-Elert's works of this type. Also, there are a number of American works (Noble, Mc Kinley etc.) not so involved, but useful as an improvised type.

\* Martin Fischer says: "The significance of improvisation at this time cannot be too highly estimated." That is, it was part and parcel of the thought and practice of the time and much written music is directly traceable to it.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THREE-PART CANON

The Three-part Canon requires extraordinary concentration and is useful for this purpose in the highest degree. Even if the player never gets to the point where he thinks his canons are worth listening to, at least he will increase stoutly in— *attention*, his basic need. For theoretical preliminary study see Prout "Double Counterpoint and Canon."

Write out to 12 or 14 measures. Then, put aside written work and try to improvise 8 measures, *adagio assai!*

*Note:—* On alternate days, improvise two and three-part canons.

#### Canons in Three Voices

**I**

**II**

**III**

etc.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ESSENTIALS OF FUGUE

[For theoretical pursuit of Fugue, the short work by Higgs.]

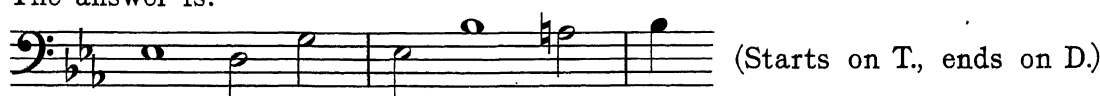
1) In treating of the essentials of Fugue, I refer to those points of special difficulty to the improviser. Perhaps the only great problem is constructing the *answer*. Note first that there are two different types, the *tonal* and the *real*.

Tonal is where the answer responds to the 'high-lights' of the subject, these high-lights being the tonic and dominant notes used in that subject.

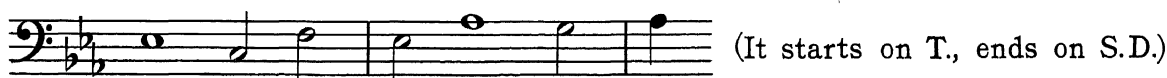
Subject in Bach's big E flat (*tonal*) Fugue is:



The answer is:



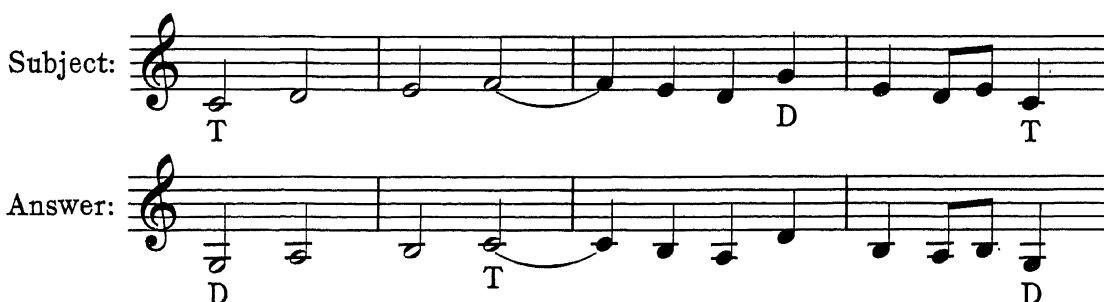
Suppose the answer were *real*, that is, *exact*:



That would never do for a self-respecting Fugue!

Examine the following tonal fugues: Bach's big G minor Organ Fugue, C major (No. 1. Well-Tempered Clavichord), C minor (No. 2. W. T. C.)

Next examine Bach's C major Fugue— a *real* fugue.



Examine in W. T. C. Book II Fugue No. 9 and the brilliant D major Organ Fugue.

2) The Countersubject is the counterpoint used first with the answer. It is very difficult to remember. But, the joyful thing about it is frequent use of a free C. S.

Examine the above Fugues and also the masterwork in E minor for Piano by Mendelssohn. The last named has a free C. S. What have the others?

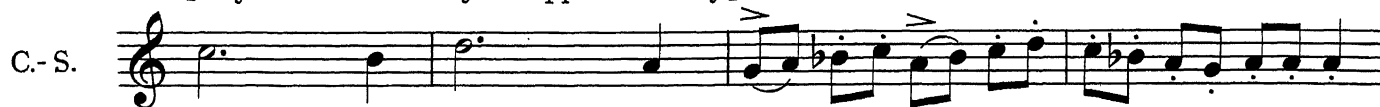
*Note:*— The C. S. must be a contrast to subject material in *rhythm* and *contour*.

3) *The whole Fugue is made out of and developed from Question, Answer and Counter-Subject.*

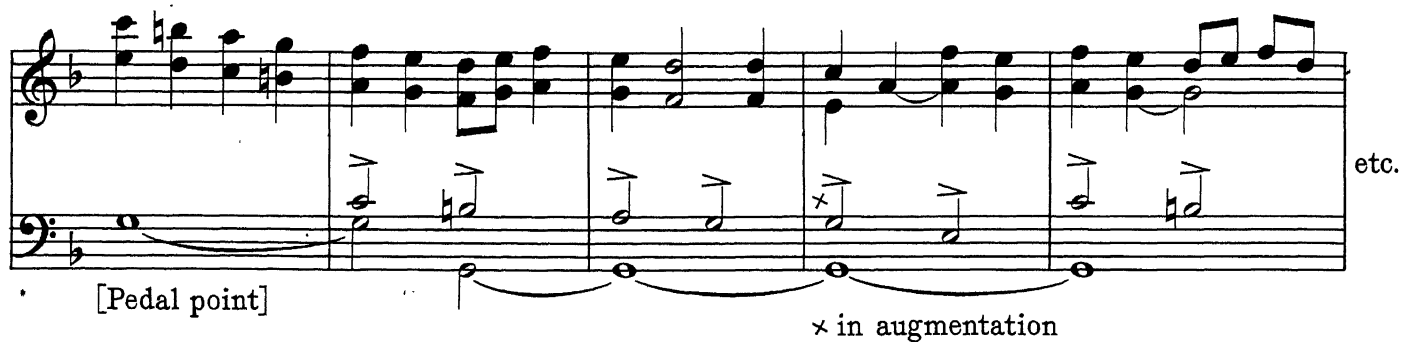


The Counter-Subject to answer:

[May be used exactly or approximately.]



- a) When used exactly, C.-S. is *strict*;
- b) When used only in essence, C.-S. is *free*.



A great many years ago Bernard Boekleemann published some Bach Fugues, using different colors to represent the various essential parts. Any reference to these will repay the trouble.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SUMMARY OF STRUCTURES

*Musical architecture is the great single essential of all great music.* Structure, good or bad, is shown in everything from the simple phrase to a cathedral-like Symphony. The Concert improviser will, therefore, study the structure of all basic types.

- 1) Sketch Forms, as Chopin's Preludes;

A  
A B

- 2) Song Forms

A B A with or without Coda, as MacDowell's Woodland Sketches;

- 3) Minuets and Scherzos

A B A - C D C - A B A and modifications as in Beethoven;

- 4) Marches- A B A or as Minuets;

- 5) Waltzes- as above- See Chopin;

- 6) Rondos;

A B A C A  
A B A C A D A  
A B A development A B A

- 7) Sonata Form;

A B C1 T- Dev<sup>t</sup>- A B C1 T

- 8) Canon (with free parts), see delightful F sharp Canon by Jadassohn in addition to the Bach and Franck works;

- 9) Fugue- see under Fugue;

- 10) Fugue coupled with Theme- Rheinberger No. 8;

- 11) Fugue with Chorale ending- Mendelssohn Piano in E minor;

- 12) Basso Ostinato (see Arensky);

- 13) Passacaglia- Bach, of course!

- 14) Evolving forms. (see Page 37.)

#### ESSENTIALS OF SONATA FORM

First movement of a Sonata or Symphony usually has this form. It is a three part scheme highly organized.

A is fully built theme.

B is contrasting, usually lyric.

Closing Theme is really an episode.

So far is called the Exposition. Development follows- any length- deriving from all or any part of Exposition.

At close of the Development Group is a return of Exposition with keys stressing the chief tonality. (This means that B and Closing Theme are transposed from some key other than Tonic (usually Dominant, or relative minor or major) over to Tonic.

The forms into which music casts itself are Homophonic— primarily harmonic— and Polyphonic— primarily contrapuntal. Polyphonic pieces seldom go over into homophonic. Homophonic pieces may shift occasionally.

Themes may be any length, but a solidity and completeness must rule. [See Op. 2, No. 3, I solid-ity of first three lines. So solid that they balance two and one half pages of other matter.] Second themes are opposites of first themes. [See Moonlight Sonata, last movement.] The episode is a sketchy theme. It hasn't quite grown up. It has less finish and poise and finality. [See episodes in Op. 106.] Or, Op. 2, No. 3, I from fourth line. [Pauer's "Forms" (Novello), published long ago, gives a fine bird's-eye view of the older structures.]

## The Sonata as a Whole

The first movement (in a four movement work) usually has Sonata-Form. [See Beethoven's Op. 26 and Op. 27, No. 2, for an exception.] The second movement may be a slow movement in any form desired. The third movement usually is a Scherzo. The fourth a Rondo. [See Beethoven's Rondos in Op. 13, Op. 26, Op. 53 and Op. 57.]

*The Rondo* is a good extemporising form with its chief theme coming back over and over again. Theorists like to classify rondos into six or seven types. [See chapter on subject in Goetschius' work: Models of the Principal Musical Forms, Schirmer.]

### Suggested Start for First Movement

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system begins with the tempo marking *Maestoso* and the dynamic *ff*. It features a series of chords in the right hand, some with triplets, and a more active bass line. The second system continues with similar chordal textures, but includes a section marked *fff sharply* with ascending lines in both hands. The score concludes with the word *etc.*

## Subject for Slow Movement

**With sonority**

*p*

etc.

[Slow movement might be made out of any other measure of hymn subject.]

## Subject for Scherzo

**Grotesquely**

[Canon subject, page 22, to be developed freely.]

## Subject for Rondo

**Lively**

*f*

etc.



## The Organ Symphony

is only a Sonata, perhaps on bigger scale, but not necessarily so.

Widor's Symphony V has five movements:

- I Allegro vivace (a Theme with Variations)
- II Allegro cantabile (very melodic, with fine motion)
- III Andante quasi allegretto
- IV Adagio (a Canon)
- V Allegro (a Toccata)

The Widor Symphony should be studied from the standpoints of marvelous style, contrast, cumulative energy.

- [See a) the writer's essays on the subject (Music, 1899-1900; The American Organist 1934)  
 b) Harvey Grace's work on the subject;  
 c) Albert Riemenschneider's notes.]

## The Suite

This is a favorite combination of pieces in almost any combinable forms, with *less responsibility* as a rule than the Symphony.

[For divisions or probable combinations, see chapter on Ways and Means in Public.]

*Note:--* A thing has good form or musical shape when ideas are arranged so that they have

- a) clarity;
- b) consecutiveness;
- c) power of reaching a climax;
- d) repose enough never to seem in a hurry;
- e) a conclusion that finishes and does not simply stop;

I believe the thematic index to Bach's *Art of Fugue*, showing various transformations of the one and only theme used by Bach in his last work, will give the improviser all he needs to know about the process, the progress, the expansion and extension and infinite varying that is possible for a four-measure theme.

Fuga I a 4 voci  
Andante con moto

Fuga II a 4 voci  
Andante ma molto mosso

Fuga III a 4 voci  
Andante

Fuga IV a 4 voci  
Andante con moto

Fuga V a 4 voci  
Andante con moto

Fuga VI (in stile francese) a 4 voci  
Andante sostenuto

Fuga VII a 4 voci  
Andante sostenuto

Fuga VIII a 3 voci  
Allegro moderato

Fuga IX a 4 voci  
Allegro molto

Fuga X a 4 voci  
Allegro, ma molto moderato

Fuga XI a 4 voci  
Allegro moderato

Fuga XII a 4 voci  
Un poco Allegro

Fuga XII (inversa)

Fuga XIII a 3 voci  
Allegro

Fuga XIII (inversa)

Fuga XIV a 4 voci (Variante zu No. X)  
Un poco Allegro

Canone I (per augmentationem in motu contrario)  
Allegro con moto

Canone II (all' ottava)  
Allegro

Canone III (alla decima)  
Allegro assai

Canone IV (alla duodecima)  
Allegro assai

Fuga I per due Pianoforti  
Allegro moderato


Fuga II per due Pianoforti (in altro modo)  
Allegro moderato

Fuga XV a tre soggetti ed a 4 voci  
Allegro moderato e maestoso

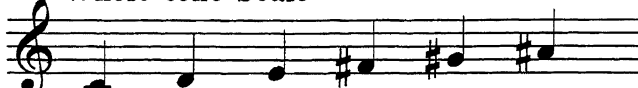
## CHAPTER XXV

### SPECIAL SCALES

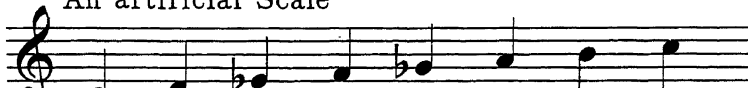
A **Pentatonic Scale**



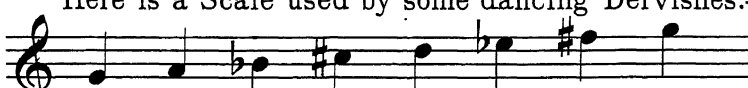
B **Whole tone Scale**



C **An artificial Scale**



D **Here is a Scale used by some dancing Dervishes:-**




[See Eaglefield Hull's "Modern Harmony" for further ideas and idioms.]

### Exercises for Special Scales

- 1) Harmonize the hymn in quasi modal manner as if it were Lydian.
- 2) Harmonize the hymn (in F) omitting B $\flat$  and E in melody, substituting other notes, making a 'sort of' pentatonic effect.

3) Make whole tone scale from:-



Now play (in the hymn) all C's as C sharp, and D's as D sharp. This will give the whole tone idea.

- 4) Take the artificial scale and very slowly harmonize it and make 8 measure phrase.
  - 5) Harmonize each Gregorian Scale according to the strict Church Mode theory.
- The essentials to keep in mind are:

- a) Each scale has its own special chief notes;
- b) All Plagal scales end as their relative authentic ends— as to chord.

## CHAPTER XXVI

# ORGAN REGISTRATION

For some time keep on paper, in full sight, something like the ideas below. Try to select registration like the following to get the idea of color changes clearly:

### I

- A- Foundation stops
- B- Reeds
- Cl Ep- Reeds and flutes
- Dev.- Strings, reeds to Full Organ on
- A- Full Organ (Crescendo Pedal)
- B- Reeds and strings
- Cl Ep- Reeds, strings and flutes
- Coda- Full Organ (Sforzando Pedal)

### II

- A- Solo Clarinet
- B- Soft flutes
- A- Solo Clarinet with secondary voice on strings

### III

Flutes chiefly

- A- Alternate manuals, reeds and flutes *mf*
- B- Solo Concert Flute
- A- Alternating all departments of organ
- Coda- Full Organ

## CHAPTER XXVII

### WAYS AND MEANS IN PUBLIC

Invariably have two plans thought out upon which to improvise, to suit most any character of subjects submitted. For at least two months before the first public "show," improvise with all kinds of themes kind and unkind friends will submit upon the two quite different blue-prints of four movements each. One always finds that hundreds of Sonatas e. g. are written on same general plan, so do not think that an unexpectedly strange motif will be strange enough to throw out one's engineering. On being given the themes look over list of forms and styles. See in which order they should be used. Stand up all themes to be used in a row on the desk. Copy in key you wish them. Then, "go to it" without any hesitancy, knowing that not more than one in the audience could do it any better. Being dull is the only vice, so make it have the rough go-aheadness which earlier has been referred to. The rough-hewn and rugged is a better starting point than the smooth and suave.

Here are "floor plans" to keep near you until selection of forms is made on reception of themes.

Suppose a Suite is what is most suitable, one has the choice of an endless array of combinations.

#### Old Style Suite

- a) Prelude (on Gt.)
- b) Allemande (on Sw.)
- c) Courante (on Ch.)
- d) Sarabande (Sw. Strings)
- e) Gigue (Full Organ)

#### Any kind of a Suite

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| a) Prelude (Sw.)                       | a) Prelude |
| b) Choral (Ch. with<br>Choral on Gt.)  | b) Canzone |
| c) Fugue (Gt. <i>mf</i> to <i>ff</i> ) | c) Scherzo |
|  | d) Adagio  |
|  | e) March   |

Two formulas (to use when inspiration pressure is low!)

Formula No. I (For Postlude - March)

(Always look for two motifs)

- A** Solid march movement based on whole melody noble in style - *f* - play on full swell closed (with pedal)
- B** (*p*) (16' 8' & 4') derive from motif 2 or by inversion Whole Melody.  
Accompaniment - staccato or dreamy.
- C** (*f*) on Gt (& Sw) theme as before, add heavy moving pedal.  
Coda (SFZ Ped) (a) double pedal point or  
(b) fugue ending over single pedal point (Maestoso)

Formula No. II (Chiefly for Prelude)

Select opening motif - 6 or 7 notes. Play in single notes low register and develop contrapuntally two voices, three voices, etc. until higher register is reached.

Start *pp* on 16' & 8' Sw.

Develop *cresc. poco a poco* until Full Swell is reached. Then, use all of theme as given and build up broadly, homophonically *ad lib.* until Full organ is reached (or *dim.* to *pp* organ).

## Sonata

63

- |           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| I Allegro | III Adagio           |
| II Minuet | IV In Style of March |

*Note:*— For stirring Marches for Organ see Widor's First and Third Symphonies.

## Symphony

- |             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| I Allegro   | IV Canon (slow or medium slow) |
| II Adagio   | V Toccata                      |
| III Scherzo |                                |

How long does it take one to do all these things? Just as long as organ playing. If put on a daily schedule as a part of the organ work, it will seem a very natural procedure.

Many organists seem to think they should just *naturally* do it. That is, without study. Such are, of course, on an unfruitful track. To keep improvisation from becoming "impoverishment" requires continuous application. An organist who follows the subject faithfully will become a shining light.

It will be of general interest to transcribe here a few of the themes given during the past century in the Prix de Rome contests in Paris. They are taken from "Sujets de fugue et thèmes d'improvisation donnés aux concours d'essai etc." compiled by Constant Victor Desiré Pierre and published by Heugel et Cie., Paris, 1900.



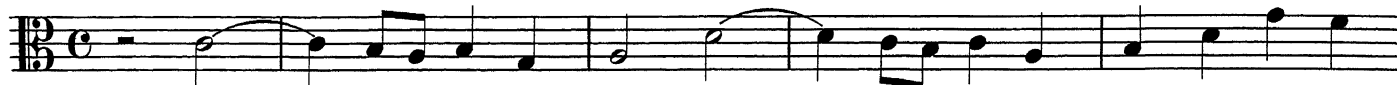
1825, 1835, 1840



1826, 1838



1827, 1839



1891

TH. DUBOIS



1837



1884 Janvier

A. BAZILLE



1843 Juin

HAYDN (Quatuor)



CHERUBINI

**Andantino con moto**

# APPENDIX

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### IMPROVISATION FOR CHILDREN

#### An Approach

The best approach to improvisation with the child already studying music is from the "play" or fun side. It is for the purpose of stimulating inherently natural musical feeling, the building of a love of music without attention to the finger practice elements entering in the short daily time given to it.

Only a child specialist has the requisite knowledge and instinctive methods to deal with this question. I am therefore indebted to Miss Mildred Weston (whose works for children are known widely) for a *modus operandi* that 'will work'.

I am going to present the subject, briefly, first under headings that long have been questions in many minds; and then in a "sample" lesson.

#### Age to begin

From the beginning of any study of music, no matter how young or old.

#### What the Subject is called

Making up pieces.

#### Length of Lesson

About five minutes out of a half-hour.

#### Effect of "making up pieces" upon the practice of set music

Seems to be most salutary, when child takes any interest whatsoever in improvising.

#### Effect upon Memory

Decided help, as children are quick to recognise "home" chords, "going home" chords, and certain things in set music that *they* have tried to do in "making up" music.

#### Effect of Improvisation upon so-called slow Pupils

Some of this type seem to respond better than the "smart" ones.

But, when there is no response, *do not press the point of* "making up" things, as it rubs in on the child the fact that here is one more angle to music that he cannot grasp and so discourages him.



## Something about alert Pupils

A pupil may be bright in set music and give no response to creating it himself. When he does respond, he is usually delighted and wants to do it all the time. Some of this type have no originality but like to keep on repeating effects they have discovered, while some unpromising youngsters are quite experimental.

## Matter of a Title

About half the time, titles are of good effect; usually a stimulant to the imagination. But, it is well also to try

gay music  
sad music  
a dance  
a song  
rain music

## Suggested Titles

Since great composers often use titles of all sorts as a medium of understandable contact, surely the child is in the right when he wants to "compose" a

Sleep of my Baby  
Dance of the Sandman  
Sunshine  
Elephant  
Fierce Lion  
Big Bass Drum

No theory, but lots of fun!

## Ways to start

1) One way is suddenly to suggest: O let's make up a piece now about rain— or lions— or drums. One chord strung out to four measures might be first piece. [See model lesson page 70.]

2) Another way is to start singing things; singing a half phrase, having pupil sing a little farther.

3) Then reverse it, pupil starting something and teacher finishing. Not difficult to create interest when melody is in mould of child's experience.

4) Teacher clap rhythm; child finish. Reverse. Short phrases first, say two to four measures. This can be extended little by little so that teacher can make up theme A, child theme B, and teacher repeat A. Form is thus suggested.

A child's improvising is associated in the minds of most persons with a strumming and banging that is a manifestation of physical energy only. Which fact provides the creative-music enthusiast with an argument for the necessity of directing that energy.

There is a wide gulf between a young pupil's response to a thoughtfully organized direction and the much discussed sheer imitation that some critics deplore. This danger is exaggerated beyond all proportion by the anti-improvisors who regard it as the opposing menace to any possible good that may result from the practice.

As a matter of fact, when it comes to the point of a pupil aping his teacher, the adult is in greater peril than the child. Children are naturally insurgent and when they have once acquired a measure of assurance they will fight for their own ideas as few adults care to do.

It is not an unusual experience for a child who has improvised for a time to suggest what seems to him better endings for certain pieces he is studying. One child objected to Bach ending with a minor chord when the composition up to the last moment had been consistently major. "But it's not a *sad* piece," he protested. Another child complained of the form taken by one of his studies, his objection being that it "felt crooked."

If improvisation sharpens the musical perceptions of the child it has done a lot, but it can do even more. Properly guided and sustained it can be a source of increasing joy to him. Bearing in mind the fact that each teacher will, no doubt, have his own ideas on the subject, this sample lesson is suggested only as one approach to improvising that has been tried out with very young children and has proved popular with them. The child of four if interested will respond just as quickly as his older brother. Not perhaps with the same ingenuity but he may surprise you with his capacity.

This type of lesson works hand in glove with the regular rhythm exercises and ear-training that constitute part of the modern teacher's stock in trade. It can be adapted to the individual pupil's need and can be elaborated upon for older children. As it is presented it has been used with good effect with children up to ten years, as an introduction to getting really acquainted with the keyboard.

Improvising, unlike five-finger exercises, is dependent upon the child's *wish to do*. His desire must be preserved at any cost even if it means the further and further postponement of any progress. Improvising should be regarded as the child's play-time in music, to be enjoyed, not merely endured.

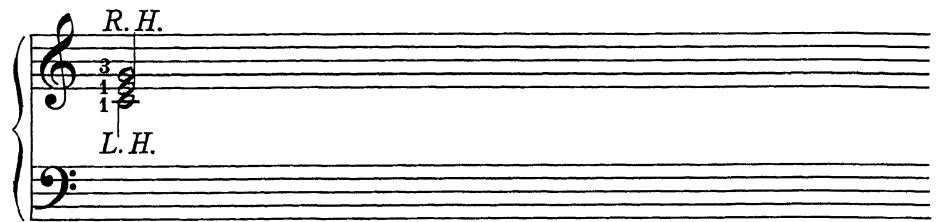
And now let us start our play with the simple chord of C. As the child is introduced to different scales he will take pleasure in transposing his improvisation to see in which key he likes it best. Changing the register from the middle of the piano is usually stimulating. But, for the beginning lessons, we will accustom the small hands to Middle C and its environs. March rhythm has been used in this particular exercise because it seems the rhythm to which most children respond quickly.

# The Lesson

The teacher says:-

Let us take  
The chord of C  
And make a piece  
For you and me.

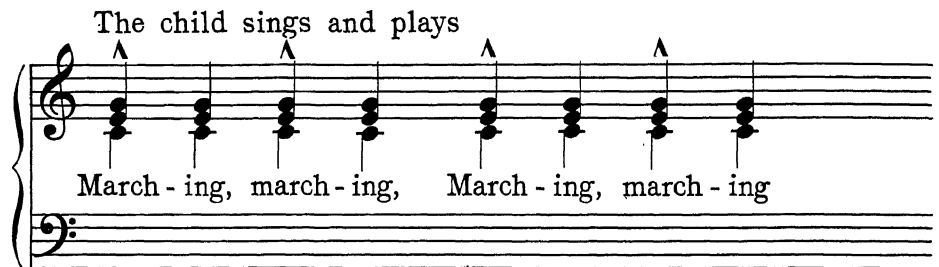
The child plays:-



Play it four times  
In a row  
Not too fast  
Or not too slow.



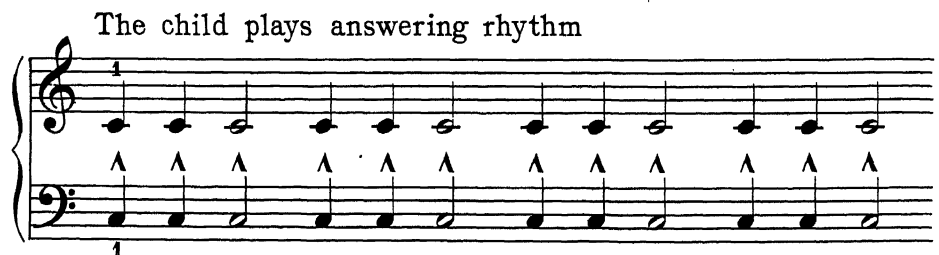
Play it now  
Like tramping feet-  
Soldiers marching  
Down the street.



Play it loud.  
Then softly play  
As the soldiers  
March away.



Hear the drum!  
Tum - tum - tum  
Hear the drum!  
Tum - tum - tum.



After different variations of the above the teacher suggests that the child build a piece using the chord of C; to make it about the soldiers they have been talking of and to be sure to remember the drum! The following are attempts resulting from such a suggestion. They were contributed by children of five and six.

Hear the sol - diers march - ing

Tum tum tum tum tum tum

When the sol - diers

Tum tum tum tum tum tum come come come.

And here is the suggestion carried further by an eight-year-old:-

See the sol - diers march - ing, March - ing down the street,

See the sol - diers march - ing, Hear their tramp - ing feet

Drum Boom!

Other suggestions:-

a) Gal - lop - ing- Gal - lop - ing- Gal - lop - ing- Gal - lop - ing.

b) Rock - a - bye Ba - by On a tree top.

It will be of real help to teachers of the subject to refer them to some of Mildred Weston's own music as follows:-

*Little Gray Dove*, from *Ten Fingers at the Zoo*, (Schmidt) was improvised for the class to show "going home" chord leading to "home" chord. Gentle music.

*Lady Moon*, from *The Sandman*, was a *tune* piece. Melody played first, after which accompaniment was added.

*Father Bear*, (Goldilocks) showed class how tune can be made out of scale. Gruff music.

And, as a 'Coda' to this chapter what could be more "proofy" of the pudding than a child's improvisation put into writing. At the time Rebecca Frances Love was in Miss Simonson's School, in Pittsburgh, under Miss Weston. Note the good 'phrase thought'

## Santa Claus is Merry

REBECCA FRANCES LOVE, VI

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The examples have been chosen so as to allow a systematic presentation of the various elements of score-reading; the reading of several parts, the reading of the C clefs, and of the various transposing instruments. Scores presenting pianistic difficulties have been avoided inasmuch as this manual deals only with fundamentals. The excerpts will, in most cases, demand the actual reading of every part since examples containing doublings of transposing instruments by non-transposing ones (e.g. the B-flat clarinet by the oboe) have been avoided as far as possible.

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